

*THE ROMANCE
OF EVANGELISM*

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THE ROMANCE OF EVANGELISM

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THE
ROMANCE OF EVANGELISM

BY
REV. J. FLANAGAN

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO
MY WIFE,
WHO FIRST QUICKENED INTO ACTION
THOSE MINISTRIES WHICH
LED ME TO CHRIST.

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PREFACE.



IT would be a strange thing if, after twenty-eight years' service as an evangelist for Jesus Christ, I had not met with a few incidents which were worth recording. Those recorded in the following pages are but fragments of many others which some day may be given to the world.

The incidents are true, names and places alone being fictitious. "The Doll Missionary" and "Pat Dyer" were written in a semi-humorous vein to solicit funds for our annual festival for the poor children of the London slums.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE ROMANCE OF EVANGELISM.

A Page from the Life of the Rev. J. Flanagan.

IN a small Yorkshire town, not far from the great cathedral capital of the county, lived a man whom we will call Jacob Mellowbell, whose name not very long ago appeared upon the sign-board of a public-house in the town referred to.

Our friend, "Landlord Jacob," was one of a vast number of publicans who had a tender heart, and who never gave the "three pulls and a half" at the beer-pump, which were necessary to fill the measure, without feeling that three nails were being driven into somebody's coffin. On one occasion a great evangelistic mission was being held in a chapel close by, and every day the preacher passed Jacob's door. Jacob kept hoping that the evangelist would speak to him, but he did not, and Jacob, who for many years had sneered at religion, and was naturally proud, would not confess his longing after peace; and so, as the customers jeered at the evangelist, whilst the dominoes were shuffled, and the smoking and drinking proceeded, "Landlord Jacob" joined in with them, stifling for the time his better thoughts and nobler desires.

"Heigh up, landlord, dusta know t' mission preacher's bahn to spout on t' vacant land opposite to-morrow? Tha mun go an' hear him; tha'd mak' a good parson!"

This bit of Yorkshire banter, from one of six or eight men who sat in the taproom, evoked a roar of laughter, in which Jacob joined, albeit in a sulky fashion. He was, however, really glad that he would be able to hear the mission preacher without going to chapel. The whole country-side would talk about it for a month, if it was known that "Landlord Jacob" had been to a mission service. And so, although he laughed at the joke in the taproom, he by no means enjoyed it, for the horrors of his demoralising trade had come upon him with awful vividness. True, it was licensed, but licensed to kill souls as well as bodies! "Oh, what shall I do?" moaned Jacob.

He passed a very uncomfortable evening, and lay awake for hours, scheming how he might hear the preacher without having to face the fire of taproom banter. He thought to himself, "If the wind is only in the right direction, I can hear him from the bedroom."

"Jim, look after t' customers this afternoon; I shan't be in till tea-time, and if yer busy, call t' missis in: shoo'll help yer."

At three o'clock came a crowd of people, mostly chapel and church-goers. Some young ladies gave out hymn-sheets, and the mission preacher ascended a dray and gave out a hymn.

"Landlord Jacob" had, soon after dinner, been upstairs and drawn down the bedroom blind, which Mrs. Mellow-bell, going up afterwards, drew up again, asking if there was going to be a funeral, that the blind was drawn to the bottom.

Presently Jacob went upstairs and again drew down the blind.

"Missis, can you give Mrs. Williams change for a 'fiver'? Master's out, and somebody's come to pay a bill." So

said Jim, popping his head inside the kitchen door, and keeping his eye on the counter.

"Aye, bring it here. Is it a 'Beckett,' or a 'Bank of England'?"

"No, missis, it's a Sheffield note," and passing the parlour door, where Jacob sat waiting for meeting-time, Mrs. Mellowbell hurried upstairs.

Jacob, seeing that there was no time to lose, jumped up, and got to the top of the stairs just as his wife had opened the bedroom door and was in the act of returning. Jacob motioned for silence, and pushing her gently into the room, told his wife the whole truth about the meeting, and about his dislike of the business in which they were engaged. Much to his surprise and joy, his wife said she would gladly go out washing rather than stay in the business a day longer than was necessary.

Unfortunately the wind was blowing in the wrong direction, and when the preacher gave out the hymn, Jacob could only hear, "There is a fountain." Occasionally he heard whole sentences, but being a very ignorant man, and never having been inside a chapel or church since he was married, he could make nothing of them. He heard detached parts of the story of a man who "came to Jesus by night," which interested him, and he thought of himself, ashamed to go and listen to the preacher, and drawing down the blind to conceal his present action.

When the missionary gave out his text, a change in the wind brought it right to the window—"John, three, sixteen: 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" And as it was read the second time Jacob, from behind the blind, could hear distinctly, but then either the wind changed, or the speaker lowered his voice, for he heard very little more. Indeed, he did not seem to care whether he heard more or not. The

way the speaker shouted the word "whosoever," time after time, had arrested him, and he seemed to shout that word as if to make Jacob hear.

He clung to the word "whosoever," and anxious fears and hopes affected his appetite; he could not eat. He observed the mission preacher more intently than ever, and thought as he passed daily, "I wish he would speak to me." Jacob always contrived to be at the door as he passed to his services. The preacher often looked at Jacob' and wished to speak to him, but was afraid of receiving an insult if he did. This went on till the last day of the mission. Jacob went to the door as usual, thinking to himself, "If he does not speak to me to-day, I'm a done man."

The evangelist was true to his time; and just as he had passed Jacob he heard a voice—"Brother!" He turned sharply round. How confused and ashamed of himself he felt that, instead of himself taking the publican's hand sixteen days ago and calling him "brother," the publican had actually had to teach him his duty! "You will excuse me, sir, calling you brother. I feel, if you won't acknowledge me as a brother, that I'll call you 'Brother.' Didn't you say across yonder that you would acknowledge the vilest collier that walked these streets as your brother?"

The evangelist took Jacob's hand in a warm grasp, and held it, waiting till he had done speaking. "God bless you, my brother. I've been longing to speak to you for days, but was afraid you might resent it."

"Come inside, sir."

"Nay, I must not come into your house; people would say I was drinking on the sly if they saw me going into a public-house."

"Well, just go down the side-street, and I'll let you in at the back door. I do want to have a word with you."

It wanted twenty-five minutes to service-time, so the

evangelist went down the lane; and Jacob took him into the cosy sitting-room. He told him that the selling of the drink had been hateful to him, that every time he served some of his customers (alas! how many of them) he felt that he was taking money that ought to feed and clothe women and children. What must he do? Could a publican be a Christian? The thought was eating into his very soul, and destroying all his peace.

"My brother," said the evangelist, "you cannot be a Christian and keep this house. 'You'll have to clear out of this business.'"

"Missis!" shouted Jacob. Mrs. Mellowbell came, and the publican said, "This is the mission preacher; and I have been telling him about our trouble, and he says we shall have to clear out of this business."

"I shall only be too glad to get out of it. I never did like it," replied his wife.

The time passed so quickly that the evangelist had to hurry off, not, however, without a word of prayer and a promise to call again before he left the town.

Next day the evangelist, who had learnt a lesson he never forgot, walked boldly into the front entrance of the public-house, and was shown into the private room; and now serious business commenced. The blinds of Jacob's heart had been closely drawn all his life, but now he wanted the light, which is sure to come to those who really seek it.

Fellow-sinner! have you ever thought how the sun waits for us long before we open the shutters in the morning? If there is a crevice in the door or shutters, the tiny gleam will enter, and if we don't open to his fuller ray, he waits all day, and comes round next morning just the same. So the Sun of righteousness seeks, in a spiritual sense, to enlighten benighted wanderers. He shines upon men and seeks entrance into their hearts, and if He were not infinite in His mercy, He would not tolerate our evil ways.

Jacob drew up the blinds of his soul as high as they would go, and the evangelist had only to pour in the light of God's blessed Word. But Jacob was very much like Thomas. Could he be accepted as a child of God? How should he know that he was received? At last he thought of the word "whosoever," and asked if there was such a word in the Bible. The evangelist turned to it quickly, and read slowly, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Will you let me look?" and, taking the book in his hand, Jacob read it over two or three times, and handed back the Bible to the evangelist, saying, "It's there safe enough! But," said he, "is that a Bible?" and taking it again out of the evangelist's hand, he looked at the back to see if the word "Bible" was there. He then examined the title-page, and read, "The Holy Bible," and giving it back to the owner, said, "'Whosoever' must mean me."

The remainder of the story is soon told. Jacob gave up his business at once, and God speedily opened a new and better way of securing a living.

Reader, depend upon it, "Them that honour Me I will honour," is God's word, and it will be fulfilled in the case of any man who has made a sacrifice at the Master's call. Have you drawn down the blinds so that light and goodness cannot enter? Have you shut out the light for years, till your hair has turned grey? Nay, have you lived in open sin? The "whosoever" of Jesus Christ means you. Do you begin to think that there is no hope for one so hardened and depraved as you are? Take comfort: "Whosoever" is your name. Fall upon your knees and ask pardon of an offended God and loving Father, and He will receive you through the merit and death of Jesus Christ, His Son.

"The Man who Saved Me."

BANK HOLIDAY, Monday, August 1st, 1894, Trinity Chapel, 5 p.m. I sat at a table near the door, arranging accounts and preparing a programme for the evening meeting. Near the table stood a man about thirty-five years of age. His face was a mingling of smiles and tears. For about five minutes he had been standing there, gazing with a kind of rapt admiration into my countenance. At last I looked up and smiled. "Why do you not take a seat, Brother Allan?" I asked.

"Thank you," he replied, "I have not time to sit; my train goes soon."

"But what brings you here to-day?"

"I have come once more to look at the man who saved me."

My head drooped, and the unbidden tear would come. The past was awakened. How I saved him was as follows:—

It was a beautiful scene; the vast auditorium was crowded. Far away into the distance human forms faded into a strange, unintelligible mist. Three thousand faces were gazing upon the preacher. The organ tones were swelling softly through the vast building, taming the passions, collecting the thoughts, and hushing into silence the earthly sounds of human feet, as the late comers quietly sought out the few seats which were still vacant.

It was the hour of worship, and that vast crowd had gathered to hear the truth as it is in Jesus. It was a

"mixed multitude" indeed. All sorts and conditions of men were there. Democracy rubbed against purple; fine linen fraternised with the coat of the beggar; saint and sinner sat side by side. Life's poor distinctions vanished. The beautiful maiden was shadowed by silvery age; the youth, full of hope, looked into the face of the man whose life had been a failure, and to whom the only reality was despair. Yes, nearly all ranks were there to listen to burning, passionate words about sin and salvation.

Far down on the right side of the arena, crouching behind one of the pillars, was a poor, besotted creature, from whom the persons near shrank in horrified disgust. He was partly seated upon a chair; *partly*, I say, for the weight of his body was divided between the chair and the pillar against which he leaned. He noticed the shrinking of the people from him, and a look of cynical contempt played on his unwashed face. The smile passed; a cloud of anger succeeded. His lips moved; something between a hiss and a curse escaped them. Someone pressing through the crowd stumbled over his foot, and turned to apologise; but when they saw his face the apology was left unuttered. They passed on. The space between him and the people around was a parable of his life. Between him and ordinary respectability there was a great gulf fixed. Up to a certain point the widening of this gulf pained him, but the pain was growing less now. Sitting in that congregation, after the momentary smart, he appeared to enjoy the thought that he was a nuisance to everybody near. To him the sneers and kicks of a crowd were the mere commonplaces of life. Contempt had no power to move him. Yet he commenced life with the same heritage of innocence as we; and when reason dawned, the ways of virtue had been courted. He had tasted the fruits of Paradise; but the tempter came, and for the fleeting joys which sensual pleasure affords he forsook the Eden of bliss.

Fallen—ah! so low!—he sought here and there the lost good, but never found it, until, hopeless, miserable, despairing, that Sabbath evening he wandered into the house of prayer. Hopeless, did I say? Yes, in his own estimation, but not in the estimation of *Another*.

Love kindles love. The suicide dies through lack of love. Excess of love is heaven! When the soul responds not to love it is lost. Love is life. Love is the crown of all things. All things serve love. Love owns all things—"all things are yours." The agony of love is ecstasy. The completion of love is heaven. Love is wisdom, faith, righteousness. God is love.

Love creates; love redeems; love saves.

So poor Allan needed the creative force of love in another heart to plant hope and faith in his own. Deep in his soul, so crushed and bruised with sin, there was a slumbering divinity. Below the beast there was a man—a man who, quickened into life by the Spirit of God working through human agency, would rise into Christian saintliness. But I anticipate.

The service commenced. The power of God descended. Both the congregation and the preacher saw heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the sons of men. Flashes of spiritual light illumined all our hearts. The Invisible "appeared in sight," and God was "seen by mortal eye."

There was no sound save that of the preacher's voice and the occasional "Amen" of an enraptured soul. The hush of eternity was upon us all. God rained on that vast audience the divine influence. Oh, it was grand! Talk not to me of the delights of philosophy or the bliss of the recluse; tell me not of the pleasures of sin or the glory of fame; my soul has touched a point of bliss infinitely beyond. Whether in the body or out of the body I could not tell. Spirit-rapt, God-possessed, with fiery

tongue I told of the Cross, and under that telling saw men bow in awe before the living God. Faith rose, blessed power, making eternal things real, wielding the sceptre over reason and conscience. Reason walks; faith flies. Faith reaches the throne before reason has put her shoes on. It is faith which connects the souls of men with the power of the Holy Ghost.

At the close of the sermon there were many seekers of salvation. I passed in and out among the throngs, encouraging, reproving, warning. At last I came to the pillar behind which leaned Allan. The stubbornness was gone. A look of utter misery was on his countenance. He had been weeping. The sleeve of his threadbare coat, grease-stained, was wet with tears. I drew nearer and spoke to him. He raised his head, and I had a full view of his face. Alas! what a face! What Victor Hugo says of the face of Javert might be said of the face of this man, with just a slight difference. "You could not see his forehead; it had disappeared under his hat; you could not see his eyes—they were lost under his brows. You could not see his chin, it was buried in his cravat; you could see no sign of his soul, it was lost in his shame." In the last sentence lies the difference. Javert had no soul. This man had. The falling tear told that behind the shame was the human heart.

I laid my hand upon his shoulder. He looked up. Our eyes met. The look and the touch were sympathetic. I thought he trembled. The greasy coat-sleeve was again brought into requisition. He hung down his head and—wept.

"Are you seeking salvation?" I asked.

"God knows I need it," he answered bitterly.

"Well, listen: 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

His response was a wild laugh.

'What,' I said, "do you despise a statement like that?"

"Oh, no; I don't despise it. The only thing is, it makes no difference to me."

"How is that?" I asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

"Come, now," I said; "that is not the real feeling of your heart. It seems to me that the fruits of sin have been bitter in your case. You look as though your life had lost all joy. How foolish to follow evil until it has brought you to a condition like this! But it is not my business to upbraid you. No doubt your conscience has done that enough already. But I am here to tell you of One who bore the penalty of your wrong and mine. Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man. He bore the cross for your salvation, and now pardon is offered to all who repent and believe."

The man listened attentively with head buried in his hands.

I *felt* that he was weeping. Those tears were sacred. I stood in silence with head turned away. The soul in deep grief is too holy to be watched. No man, even by sympathy, can touch the two extremes of grief or joy in any life. The keenest bliss or bitterness is known to the heart alone. The sweat of blood must not be witnessed. "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast." The "stone's cast" is always between the spectator and the sufferer.

He wept! Blessed tears! They are the safety valve of the heart. Tearless grief is terrible. Who knows but that the rain may be God's tears over a sinning world? Spiritual shortsightedness may often be traced to tearless eyes. As he who kneels is higher than he who stands, so he who weeps is nobler than he who frowns. Tears, in many eyes, are the first signs of returning manhood. This man wept, and his tears revealed that hope, sweet angel of

the heart, though he denied it, had not departed from his life. His tears were not the tears of the hypocrite, but

“Tears from the depth of a divine despair
Rising in the heart and gathering to the eyes
Through looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that were no more.”

I cannot say how long he wept, but at last he turned to me again. Taking his arm, I drew him gently through the crowd and led him to a private room. When alone I pressed God's claim upon him. He listened respectfully. I think I grew eloquent with burning tenderness as I described the peace and joy which awaited him if he would only surrender to Jesus. I held the Cross before his eyes, and pleaded for an instant decision. Concluding my appeal, I asked him where he lived. He told me. I proposed prayer. We both knelt. I poured out my soul to God. Sobs and groans greeted my ears. Still I prayed. His agony became greater. He trembled violently. Still I pleaded, hoping by the intercession of my own heart to lift him into faith. Suddenly the sobbing ceased; the man leaped to his feet. Looking round for his old battered hat, he seized it, and with a passionate, despairing cry of “My God, it's no use! I'm lost! I'm lost!” he rushed from the room. The door banged violently to, and I was left alone.

He was gone. Out into the wide, wide world his feet once more had stepped. Should I ever see him again? Ah! I recollected the address. I would go and see him. The address he had given me was in a low, crowded part of the city. I knew it as a den of misery. To visit there might shock my feelings. But what of them if a soul was to be saved? Are human hands too dainty when a soul is to be rescued from the gutter of sin? The hands which shaped the lily-cup and fashioned the hills were pierced for me. And are mine too delicate for service rude among the sons of men? No! A thousand times

no! Down, lower down, for me! Take who will the throne, give me the place where souls are struggling in the shades of night. The only reward I ask is that brutish and ignorant lives may rise on my

"Dead self to nobler things."

The next day I commenced my search for poor Allan. Wending my way through the crowded streets, I passed on where the gin-filled atmosphere permeated every nook and corner in the narrow, badly ventilated courts and alleys. The demons of filth and poverty reigned supreme. Drunken hags, with faces flabby and red, hung round the dramshop bars. Womanhood and the demon here were closely allied. Loafers slouched about the corners with pimpled noses and leprous look. Their brutish stare tested one's nerves. Entering an old, battered court, I came to the door of a house near the end. A woman, with the remnant of an old brush, was sweeping away some of the refuse which appeared to have collected above the ordinary layers. Her face was a history. The cruelties of a hundred generations appeared stamped upon her countenance. The swing of a scimitar would have been as easy to her as the sweep of a brush. She glared upon the rising dust as one could imagine a brutal Turk glaring upon an inoffensive Armenian. Yet possibly this woman was a product of the society which had moulded her. I remembered that good Father Bienveno was indulgent towards women and towards the poor, for upon them the weight of society falls most heavily, and that he said:—"The faults of women, children, and servants, of the feeble, the indigent, and the ignorant, are the faults of their husbands, fathers, and masters, of the strong, the rich, and the wise." And possibly this woman's soul had been left in darkness by those who fashioned it. This is true of many. Therefore guilt oft lies heaviest not upon those who commit the sin, but upon those who tempt to it

and make it possible. God in Paradise passed from the woman to the man, from the man to the serpent, and there He placed the curse.

"Madam," I said, "do you know Allan D——?"

Instantly the brush stopped in its dusty course, and the two eyes glared upon me like coals of fire. One long stare, callous, ominous, was all I received. The only result of my question was more emphasis in the shape of more vigorous action on the sweeping brush. Again I spoke:—

"I beg pardon, my good woman, but I think you must know the person to whom I refer. He informed me that he lodged here, and I called to see if that was true."

The sweeping did not cease, but the woman answered with an angry grunt—

"Yes; he *did* lodge here, but never again. He is a disgrace to a padding ken" (low lodging-house). "I cleared him out last night. No more for me!" She finished her grunting sentences with an angry laugh.

"Then you have discharged him from sleeping here?" I asked.

"He sleeps here no more, the brute!" she grunted out.

"But if he were to improve his manners you would allow him to stay here, would you not? You would not kick him into the street?"

The sweeping ceased. A look of incredulity covered her Legreeian face.

"Yah! If! If! You did well to say that. No fear of him improving! The only improvement he will have will be when the devil fetches him."

And with the utterance of this hazy sentence she resumed her occupation.

Could this woman's assertion be true? Is there a bourn in *this* life which, if crossed by the soul, admits of no return? Can human nature be so dehumanised that the spark of divine fire in the soul is entirely quenched? Can

all consciousness of a lost good be destroyed? Is it not possible that in the worst man there may be one moral oasis which the swine's snout has never ravaged, one secret chamber where the precious jewel of a possible response to the appeal of God may be sacredly kept for some deep emergency of life? Oh! how many a soul we may have passed, disgusted by the marks it bore of sensuality and sin. Like Dante at the gate of hell, we have read the invisible writing of an abandoned hope. We have seen faces upon which the traffic of sin had passed so long, that we failed to discover a promise of redemption. The teaching of a correct spiritual philosophy seems to be that the *soul which sins long enough will sin longer*. The divine element, the primitive spark, may be extinguished. The silence of the soul may be only broken by the eternal storm. But the mysterious bound in the downward course is not discoverable to man. The line is secret, the Eternal alone can see it. Let no man pronounce the doom of his fellow! It is ours to believe for every man. Hope kindles its own fire. Faith is the torch which has lighted many a despairing spirit to the skies; the faith of one man often saves another. It was when Jesus saw *their* faith He said:—"Thy sins be forgiven thee." The faith which can wreck a house or rear a cross is always victorious.

My musings ended, I found that the brain can work while the fingers are busy. I had taken from my pocket my note-book, and commenced to write on one of the leaves, while the woman watched me with a curious air. This is what I wrote:—

"Dear Brother Allan,—I want to see you. Do not shun me. I will be your friend. Do not despair. I will help you for Christ's sake. I know your sorrow and despair. Look up. There are brighter days in the future. Come to my house. I reside at ——. Never mind your attire. Let me have the pleasure of serving you. I will receive you as a brother. Do not fail me. "J. F."

Tearing out the leaf, I gave it to the woman saying :—
“Madam, if Allan returns will you please give him this note for me?”

The woman grunted an assent, and I left.

The next day, about 2 p.m., I was seated in my room. A knock sounded at the door. I opened it. There, on the doorstep, was Allan. I inwardly blessed God. “Come in,” I said. He entered timidly. Asking him to be seated, I expressed my pleasure at seeing him. He seemed surprised at such a reception, and was consciously impressed. To him, no doubt, it hardly seemed genuine. And no wonder! He had sinned, certainly. But temptation had ensnared and befooled him. And once down, he unconsciously sank to lower levels of life. As he qualified himself for society lower down, society higher up despised him. Scarcely any man had touched him for years but to bruise him. Friends forsook him; wife and children deserted him. He retaliated by a fostered hate and deeper sin. And now, after years of suffering and cruel wrong, here he was with a shattered body and a polluted soul. But experience is one of Nature’s golden links to bind sad souls together. I also had sinned and suffered. The brand marks were upon my own flesh. My spirit had worn the chain. But to me deliverance had come. Life was now a joy. Life’s relationships were sweet. Here was a man who heard the bay of the bloodhounds, a man who was anxiously looking in the direction of liberty. But to his own mind the possibility of liberty appeared but vague. He needed a strong arm to lean upon. I offered him mine. Bearing him upon the strength of my own faith and love, I would take him to the Emancipator of men.

Alone in that room I poured upon him all the sympathy of my soul. With prayers and tears I urged him to forsake his vicious ways for the path of reason and truth. The Holy Spirit helped me. The tender appeals, embracing as

they did all that lay between himself, his wife and children, and the Cross, succeeded.

Tears streamed from his bloodshot eyes. The greasy coat-sleeve, still damp from the result of the previous night's emotion, was again and again brought into requisition. That room henceforth was consecrated. Had not the tears of the penitent fallen there? Blessed tears! My own freely mingled with them. We both knelt at the table—knelt and wept. A passionate cry burst from his lips. It was a plea for mercy. That cry was heard. The tossed heart found rest. The scarlet stains were cleansed away by the blood of Jesus. Still kneeling, he asked for my Bible—the companion of my journeyings, the gift of a mother—and while on his knees wrote on its blank page his vow of loyalty to God. The old, blurred characters are still there, a precious memory.

Months passed. I searched for the heartbroken wife and the children. I found them; pleaded for reconciliation. The husband's conversion broke down all barriers. He has proved worthy. While I write this he is an ornament to society and a member of a Christian Church.

And that is the reason why in 1894 he came above a hundred miles to look at the face of the man who had saved him.

"I Want Jesus."

SOME years ago I was seated in my study preparing for Sabbath duty. The evening shadows were falling, and that strange time betwixt night and day, when invisible shapes assume visible form, rested upon the earth. I sat thinking of God, man, and destiny. The firelight flickering on the wall was an inspiration. The outward circumstance feeds or damps the inward fire. To me evening is a parable of the spiritual, a symbol of the unseen, the perspective of eternity. Nature is sweet

. . . "comment on the shows
That for oblivion take their daily birth
From all the fuming vanities of earth."

I communed with my own heart and was still. The mood without harmonised with the inward calm. I soliloquised: "Would that life were as full of peace as this quiet hour! Yet true it is that through all the 'loud stunning tide' of this hard world there is a calm, a sure retreat for the wearied spirit. The life 'hid with Christ in God' will not be afraid though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. A life resting there will find a quiet eventide. But how oft the shadows of life's evening form shapes in the imagination far from angelic. While life is yet young, the day is in the yellow leaf. In the autumn of days, when the harvests of love should be gathered, the flowers and fruits are all gone. Evening shadows deepen into the night where 'the worm, the canker, and the grief alone remain.'"

Thus I mused, when suddenly a knock at the study door disturbed my reverie. It was my wife, who came to inform me that I was wanted. I passed to the door of the house. A woman stood on the doorstep. She was rudely clad. Her face was pale. A peculiar gleam flashed from her eyes. She appeared to be very much excited. In a half-frightened tone she said :—

"Are you the minister, please, sir?"

"Yes, I am," I answered; "what is your business?"

"Well, sir," she said, "I have called to see if you would please come and see my husband."

"What do you want me to see him for?" I asked.

"I want you to pray with him, sir. The doctor has just called, and he says he will not last many hours; he is not ready to die, and he begged me to come and ask if you would call."

"Where do you live?" The address was given, and, with a promise that I would call, the woman left.

Alas! alas! what a sorry business a late repentance is! Early contrition is the seasonable fruit of wisdom. The tears of an early penitence are cool and beautiful as drops of dew; the tears of a late repentance are as drops of liquid fire. A man who will only repent when Eternity is within a span may find after all the bustle of a hurried prayer that he has played the fool too long.

Fifteen minutes after the woman had left my house I stood before her door, knocked, and was admitted. In a few seconds more I stood within the dying man's room.

He was a young man. A look of deep-set anguish was on his face. His eyes were deep sunken. Another world's gleam shone in them. The pale bluish tinge of the lips and the peculiar death-like colour which overcast his features betokened speedy dissolution. No "solar light" from the face of God lit up the whitened cheek. The impress of a reconciled Deity was not there. The banquet was o'er,

the reckoning had come, the dreadful reckoning, and the dying man smiled no more.

I stood within the light of the window, while the man's wife arranged his pillows so that he might lean back in a sitting posture on the bed. She having finished, I turned to him, and told him why I was there, and asked what he desired of me.

Very slowly, and amid gaspings for breath, while the fingers of each hand convulsively twitched, he said, "Thank you, . . . thank you . . . for coming. I . . . I shall soon be gone. But I am not ready to die. God help . . . me! I am only twenty-three years of age. And this which is killing me is the result of dissipation. The drink, theatre, evening parties, fast life, have brought me to this. Oh! my God!" he shrieked, as an awful convulsion of pain seized him. Gradually he became calm, and then recommenced:—

"Yes. . . . I have brought it on myself. . . . I might have lived. But . . . but . . . I have killed myself."

As he rested for a moment I said:—

"This is all very sad. Awful indeed is your condition. But what is your special reason for desiring to see me?"

"I wanted to know, sir, if it was possible . . . for me to be forgiven. Something . . . is telling me I can't. . . . Oh, what shall I do? . . . what shall I do?"

Thrilling were the tones in which he uttered these words.

I fixed my eyes upon him and said, "Listen to me. A few brief hours, possibly only a few minutes, and your soul, stained by a life of sin, will be in the presence of a holy God. Before Him you must answer for the deeds done in the body, and what is your defence? You have none, you make none. Here you are with an emaciated body, a wretched life, only distant a few heart-throbs from Eternity. What is it you desire? What would you like? Do you wish me to go out and gather the 'jolly good fellows'

together who toasted you, and cheered you on in your dissipation? Would you like your chamber to become a scene of sinful revelry, and your past companions with drunken glee to drink health to your soul while it is passing away?"

These words were spoken under an intense feeling of pity and righteous indignation—pity for his lost condition, indignation that God should only be thought of when the cup of life was drained to the very dregs.

Never can I forget the look of sorrow on the man's face as I held before him the curse of his wasted life and the awful meeting of his soul with God. His eyes started from their sunken sockets. His features assumed a ghastlier hue when I reached the words "drink health to your soul while it is passing away." He could bear no more. Lifting both hands, he reached them out pleadingly towards me and cried, "No! no! Not that! not that!"

"What, then, do you desire?"

Passionately he cried, "I want Jesus!"

"Yes," I answered, "and that is why I spoke to you as I did. I wanted to win from your lips the confession you have made, that in my ministry I might tell others that in life's 'great sorrows and mighty griefs' there is only ONE who is sufficient for the soul in peril—JESUS."

So, reader of this page, when the ball is ended, and the theatre is closed, and the ginshop is left for ever; when the pleasures of life pall on the spirit, and those who are hastening you to your burial leave you and flee; when the chill of death touches your feet, and the shadows of eternity gather about your soul, you—yes, you—will want Jesus.

Now, now, now, hide in the cleft of His wounded side, that when the supreme crisis comes *you may be saved*.

A Fight for a Soul.

PART I.

ARRANGING THE FORCES.

IT was Sunday evening. The hour of worship was drawing near. The streets of the town, which half an hour before had been comparatively deserted, were now crowded with people. One could scarcely pass with comfort along the pavement. Many were proceeding to church, while many, alas ! were on their way to the liquor shops. The majority, no doubt, were bent on pleasure.

To me personally that Sabbath had been passed in the usual peaceful manner. With its dawning came resurrection peace, and its hours had gone by in meditation on the Word, teaching the young, visiting the sick, and worship. Evening brought a tired, but restful, feeling of blessed quietude and holy joy. But that Sabbath was not ended ; storm, passion, and conflict remained. At the moment referred to my heart was still. One thing to me alone was needed to make earth as heaven : a world in fellowship with God. That is a consummation still to be devoutly desired. The deep shadows still hang densely over human lives. Wrongs, tyrannies, and pains still disturb the souls of men. The millennium is not yet. Millions are still lying in the lap of the devil. His arms almost encompass the world.

I had reached the entrance to the house of prayer. A few were turning their steps in thither, but, alas ! the great

majority passed on to less holy associations. I had ascended several steps towards the vestibule, when suddenly I felt someone touch my shoulder. I turned round hastily and saw a young lady whose face was familiar to me, as we worshipped in the same congregation. I raised my hat. She blushed and said: "I hope, sir, you will please pardon my speaking to you, but an important matter impelled me to do so. You know the Devil's Close. Well, a man who resides in one of the houses is now dying. For many years he has been a sceptic. His hatred of Christian principles has been remarkable. I have known him a long time, and have felt great interest in him. Christian friends during the past few days have tried to approach him, but with oaths and curses he has driven them away in disgust. God has put it upon my heart to come and ask you to pay him a visit. I believe you might do him good. Will you go and see him?"

The last words were spoken in an earnest, pleading tone. I thought a moment, then answered:—

"Yes, I will go and see him. God grant that my visit may prove beneficial."

"Thank you, I think it will," she said. "I am afraid you may be insulted; if so, I hope you will be merciful in your thoughts towards me."

I laughed, and answered: "You need not fear; I shall not think ill of you whatever happens."

I passed into the church. The service commenced. I have no doubt the preacher was both eloquent and wise; but I confess that his sermon was of no interest to me; my thoughts were far away in that room in the Devil's Close, where the soul of the dying sceptic was hastening to its last account. I thought of my promise. Perhaps my visit would be useless, or should I be too late? Oh, woeful condition, to throw out the life-line and find that the fingers of the soul are paralysed; to preach the gospel

of grace and be rewarded with the stare of a moral idiot ! Try as I might, I could not fix my attention upon the word of life. I became agitated. Should I leave the chapel and go at once ? No. Instinct told me that the faith of *one* man would be of no avail. I remembered that the devil in one lad once overcame the faith of nine apostles. But here the spirit of evil had lodged in a man for many years. No, I must not go alone ; I must have help. Where should I get it ? Who would be the most efficient ? Elders of the church were all around me, men whose feet had trodden the way of life. Their faith witnessed to their powers of endurance, but in a case of demoniacal possession they would be useless. Prudence is in many instances a millstone round the neck of faith. Desperate ills require desperate remedies. We cannot fight spiritual foes with carnal weapons, but there is something in a sanctified shout for all that. There is a vast difference between the "sound of many waters" and "the tinkling cymbal." A glorified shout has often loosened the devil's masonry. There is a spiritual method which is smooth and orderly and decorous. Such a method may do for the delicate soul which "lacks one thing," but for the life hammered out on the anvil of sin it is of little service. Even God at times handles some people roughly. Some yield to a whisper of love ; others need the burning lava of judgment. Take a cultured reasoning faith to some, and you confirm their despair. They require a faith on their behalf simple, bold, audacious, almost impudent. A faith which, without reasoning, believes the impossible—such a faith alone can chase the soul from the subterranean darkness in which it may have enshrouded itself.

Thus I mused. A dying man insult me ! What for ? For the simple reason that I should endeavour to impress upon him the reality of God. Well, so let it be. The slave of sin often dashes his chain in the face of those who

would release him. The sinner in his folly will never know what is the value to him of a believing heart. The joy of a whole nation is often based on the patient sorrow of a single life. Such souls often bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Christ may be turned upon a whole community.

The Benediction was given, and the service closed. Turning hastily in my pew, I scanned the audience in search of the individuals I needed. I must have five. They must be young, strong, simple, consecrated, and full of fervour. The lover of a mock decency must not be included. Men afraid of a *scene* or who in pleading with God would stop to correct their grammar were of no use to me. I wanted those who would not be weakened by a consciousness of their defects. *Infirmity* is a power when the Holy Ghost possesses the whole personality. In a few moments my choice was made, and the brethren mentally selected. In a few minutes I had spoken to them, inviting them to meet me in one of the vestries. They came. Closing the door, I scanned them carefully. Yes, they would do ; each man was original.

There was A., whose former ambition was to be considered *par excellence* in a dance saloon ; but God had taken the music out of his feet and put it into his heart.

There was S. He, though young, was a broken-down army man, and while he had no crutch to shoulder, he could tell how battles were won. Now he wore the uniform of King Jesus, and fought with the sword of the Spirit ; and a deft swordsman he was.

Then there was L., who literally found truth in the bottom of a well. For as he was sinking a well one day I came to the top and threatened him with all the terrors of judgment if he did not repent. With tears and trembling he confessed his sins and resolved to seek salvation. And he sought and found it.

The next, T., was a salvation pointsman, another of my spiritual children, whose daily audience was all the signalmen on a forty miles length of railway line. If a signalman sent a message to him asking what time the express had passed, he would no doubt receive in return, "Express passed box A 9.45. 'But now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'"

Then, lastly, there was F., whose peculiar sayings always charmed us, but whose thunder, at the gates of God's treasure-house always ended in showers of blessing.

"Can any of you face the devil?" I asked. They stared in astonishment. What did I mean? Was it a joke? No; they saw that I was serious.

Again I asked: "Can any of you face the devil?"

There was a brief pause; then one of them rose to his feet and said: "Well, glory be to God, I don't know what you mean; but by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ I think I could face the devil just now."

"Amen!" shouted all the rest.

"Praise the Lord!" I said. "I think you will do for the business we have in hand."

I then told them about the dying sceptic and the young woman's request, concluding with the following words:—

"Now, brothers, this man's soul is steeped in the deepest spiritual ignorance. From what I have learned, he has lived a sceptical, unholy life for forty years. His words and acts have been utterly corrupt and corrupting, and yet the Lord has dealt mercifully with him. Divine influences have surrounded him. He has a brother who has prayed for him many years; and no doubt behind the external scepticism of his life there have been times of conviction and doubt. It is impressed upon my mind that God can and will save him. He is in a dying condition. He has cursed every Christian from the door; but I believe that even yet a mightier faith and more fervent

intercession will succeed. The Spirit can melt his rocky heart. The blood of Jesus can cleanse his soul. That is my faith ; is it yours ? ”

“ Yes,” they all shouted in chorus.

Immediately our heads bowed in prayer.

“ Just a moment,” I said. “ If any brother has the slightest doubt of the conversion by God of this man’s soul this night, let him retire before we proceed further. A single doubt means failure. The doubt of one heart will weaken the faith of all. Do any of you doubt ? ”

There was no reply.

“ Let us pray.” Again we knelt together. The room was small, but the power was great. We were of one heart and mind. The glóry descended. If the place was not shaken, our souls were. It was one great burst of pleading. As we prayed we believed, and the Holy Ghost fell upon us. One or two were prostrate under the Spirit’s influence. The might of God possessed us, and we became as dead men. Our prayers had prevailed ; the victory was won. The sceptic’s soul would be saved. We only needed to go and reap the spoil. We rose to our feet ; I addressed them as follows :—

“ Now, my brothers, the battle is the Lord’s. We will now proceed direct to the house of this man. We will not converse with anyone. Let us each pray and commune with God as we walk through the street. For convenience and haste let us walk in single file ; and remember, we do not leave this man’s house until he is either converted or dead.”

PART II.

. ATTACK AND VICTORY.

Leaving the vestry of the chapel, my five friends and I passed into the street. Our way lay through the main thoroughfare of the town. Crowds of people were parading the streets. One after the other, in single file, we walked swiftly on. Now and again hands would strike together, eyes close, and a cry of "Lord, I believe," would escape our lips. The people as we passed stared, turned round, and discussed our strange march and manner. But, like the Jesuit monks at their devotions, we heard nothing, saw nothing, save the man's peril whose soul we were about to attempt to save.

A quick walk of about thirty minutes brought us to the door of No. 13 in the Devil's Close.

The house was bounded by a wall, in which was a gate facing the door. The windows of the dwelling had no shutters; the curtains up at the windows were much worn and did not fit well. Between them and the side of the window frame was a space of glass about three inches wide. The interior of the room was partly visible from the outside. By the light of a lamp we could see a woman seated on a stool near a low fire, which flickered weird-like in the grate. She was leaning forward with her elbows on her knees, her head resting on the palms of her hands. All other objects were indistinct.

I knocked at the door. It was answered by the woman referred to. For a moment she appeared startled at the appearance of six men around the door at that late hour, for I suppose it was now about half-past ten.

"Does Mr. Shadoof live here?" I inquired.

"Yes," she answered ; " but he——"

The words that followed were lost, for without more ado we entered, and the woman, still holding the door in her hand, seemed speechless.

A quick glance round revealed an extemporised bed in one corner, on which lay the dying sceptic. Everything during his last illness which reminded him of God or the future had been put away. One day he discovered a Bible in his room. He was searching for some old letters, and found it at the bottom of a box. The sight of it startled him. It had been given to him by his mother when he was leaving home for his first situation. He had kept the relic for the sake of his mother. But now the flesh was weakening, and the shadows of death were gathering around him. That Bible was a torture. Seizing it, he walked to the open window and hurled it into the street. One night, when sleepless through pain, he rose with great difficulty from his bed and paced the room. Pulling open an old drawer to obtain a handkerchief, he saw the toes of a pair of small slippers ; they were all that remained of one he had loved. He saw a vision, . . . a little cot, . . . a tender, childlike form ; . . . and heard an angel voice saying, " Father, kiss me before I go home." The kiss was given, and when the funeral of his only child was over, he secretly placed her slippers away. That night he had found them. Why he placed them there he could not tell. Perhaps it was because they were the last things he bought her before she died. He took them up tenderly. A great sob ; a moment's agony ; then the sullen gloom in his face deepened, and turning to the fire (which since his illness had been kept in his room), he threw the slippers into the flames. The horror of his act appalled him. He rushed to the grate and thrust his hand into the flames ; but he was too late—the slippers were consumed. He was found in the early morn, lying unconscious on the floor, with his hand fearfully blistered and burned.

The case of Tom Shadoof had excited the interest of the Christians in the neighbourhood. Special prayer had been made for him in their meetings. Several of the more courageous had sought interviews with him, but he drove them from the door with curses, until now no one ventured to go.

Turning to the woman, I said, "Close the door, my good woman."

I requested the brethren to be seated, at the same time taking the chair which was nearest the bed for myself.

During these operations the man eyed us keenly but credulously. Who were we? What did we want? What was the meaning of this forcible possession? Such questions appeared discoverable in the changing light of his eyes.

"How are you?" I asked. His answer was a frown.

"You seem very ill." A deeper frown.

"Well," I said, "you perhaps wonder what brings us to your bedside at this hour and in such numbers. The reason is, we are Christians, and the spirit of our Master has led us to you. We heard you were dying, and that you had no hope, and we have come to endeavour to lead you to the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ—who taketh away the sins of the world."

During the utterance of these words the man's face was a diabolical study. At the word Christian his frame shook violently. At the mention of the Lamb of God his countenance assumed a darker hue. Cursing and hate were clearly written there. His eyes rolled in horror; his fingers twitched convulsively, while once or twice he attempted to rise, but could not.

Bending near him, I said, "Do not agitate yourself; we mean you no harm, you know that. Suppose we sing you a hymn?"

At this he recovered his voice, and glaring upon me

savagely, he said, "Sing? No! I will have none of your singing here."

"Well now, calm yourself," I answered. "Suppose we pray?"

The word had hardly escaped my lips when by a mighty effort he lifted himself on the bed, and sliding partly from it, he seized a huge stick which was near to him, and, furious almost unto insanity, he sought to bring it in contact with my head. But nature failed him, and the stick fell nerveless from his hands.

"Pray!" he screamed furiously. "No! No praying here! Get out! Leave me! Go away, you dogs! Let me alone! If you don't go, I'll curse you!"

Thus he continued until breath failed him, and he sank down exhausted.

During his fanatical outburst I had risen and gone nearer to the centre of the room, which was a very large one. Turning to the brothers who were with me, I said:

"Now, my brothers, you know our mission here is to save this man. You know the solemn vow we have made not to leave this house until he is either converted or dead. You believe that nothing is impossible to God. You believe that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, and that no man, not even Tom Shadoof, need despair of God's grace. Believing and knowing these things, I want us to kneel and pray that God will manifest His mercy to this man and save his soul. Now to our knees!"

We knelt, and wondrous was the scene. Oh, what prayers! It was one great burst of intercession. Arms were uplifted; shouts were raised; sobs and tears mingled with all. *One* man on his knees is omnipotent; but we were six. Faith rose. The throne was seized. Devils fled, and glory descended.

While the mercy-seat was thus being stormed, a different scene was passing near us. The dying man had got out

of bed; groans escaped his lips; horror was on his face. Our prayers enabled the Spirit to tear the veil of sense from his blinded eyes. He was peering into the invisible, and the vision horrified him. Groan succeeded groan. He sank to the floor. His wife seeing him fall, rushed to his side and endeavoured to help him to rise. The woman was terrified.

"Take me out of this!" he screamed. "Take me out, I tell you! Let me get upstairs! Help me! help me! O God, this is hell!"

With ejaculations like these he struggled, with the help of his wife, across the room. At last he reached the stairs which led to the upper chamber. Crawling on his hands and knees, with huge sweat-drops on his brow, assisted by his wife, he reached the top. In a few minutes the woman came down with a request to me that we would cease our prayers. "Yes," I said, "we will when the victory is won." The woman moved from me to the stairs in order to close the door.

"Hold!" I said; "let the door remain open, that the sound of our petitions may reach his ears."

The woman did so. Still we pleaded. Heaven was taken by storm. There was no formal utterance. No sweet "epigrams" charmed the ear. Errors of speech remained uncorrected. It was the heart's agony in words. Desire distilled in tears. It was the soul convulsed with horror at the possible abandonment of a soul to perdition. How long we thus prayed I cannot tell. But in the supreme moment of our supplication there came an altered cry.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?"

We listened as we knelt. Again we heard, "What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" followed by sobs and tears, which caused our own tears to flow afresh. Yes, the spell was broken. Penitence had given place to despair. The

heart was subdued. That night there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over the prodigal's return.

And now what a change! The lion was turned into a lamb. Never was a conversion more thorough and blessed. The chamber where he met his fate was on the verge of heaven. Standing for a few days within the vestibule of Eternity, he witnessed to all a good confession. His words seemed inspired. The news of his conversion spread, and many visited him to behold the grace of God. Of myself and brethren he never spoke but with tears of thankfulness. His last words were:—

“Tell my brothers that I thank them with my dying breath. I had given myself up to the devil. Their songs and prayers maddened me; but their mighty supplication and persistent believing prayer so brought God's power upon me that my heart was broken. I thank God that my insults did not drive them from my door. God bless them. Tell them I die in peace, and in hope through the blood of Jesus of a joyful resurrection. My last request is that Brother F. will preach the salvation of God over my dead body before they lower it into the grave.”

And so I did. Amid the gathered crowds I stood with his coffin within six feet of me, and taking for my text “*Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?*” I preached my first funeral sermon. Women wept; strong men bowed their heads in awe. Eternity drew near. Jesus was glorified, and souls were saved.

Pat Dyer: a Tale of the Slum.

PATRICK DYER was an Irishman. How he became one is beyond my power to tell. The reasons for the diversity of mankind are wrapped in as much mystery as the beginnings of life. And the discovery of the one, for practical purposes, is of as much value as the discovery of the other. To some people the tracing of ancestry is of vast importance. They would sooner pursue it than pay their debts. To study one's "podigree," as Mr. Yellowplush would term it, is much more dignified than being honest. But it is a fool's game to be boasting of the aristocracy of our great-grandfather while our stockings are not paid for. Evidences of the Hibernian descent of Pat Dyer were plentifully distributed both about his person and his personality. For instance, he would always prick up his ears at the grunt of a genuine Irish porker. To him an essential part of every true Irishman's family was a civilised hog. Again, he had the inevitable brogue. The flavour of his Irish accent was a "rale trate" to listen to. He looked upon the English language as a well-defiled one. He considered that the accent of Erin, when speaking the English tongue, redeemed it from utter barbarism. He believed that pure Connaught was the language of the gods, as "dear ould Oireland" was the queen of all lands. He always spoke English when he talked slang, which he often did, and he always "Irished" it, as he said, when he would play the "gintleman," which was very seldom.

Pat Dyer had great faith in the antiquity and glory of his

own race. He believed humanity would not have been complete without the Irishman. To him a son of Erin was God's best work. He considered that the Irish were sent into the world to rule, but somehow Providence had played them a trick and floored them. But the case of his "counthry" would never be hopeless while they had the priest and the whisky pot. This last conviction moulded his life; for he sucked at the whisky bottle six days a week, and the priest squared him up on the seventh.

Pat Dyer always boasted of his pure breed. He was no "Liverpool" Irishman. He had slept in a mud cabin, and eaten praties from off the floor. He had smelt the beautiful turf on the banks of Killarney. He had fought at Donnybrook Fair and kissed the Blarney Stone. He had sung "Erin go' Bragh" in the streets of Kilkenny, and danced a jig at a hundred wakes. If these were not signs of true nobility, he would ask "what were?"

Foreigners who wish to distinguish an Irishman from all others may do so by three things: first, his love of fun; second, his big, soft heart; and third, his capacious mouth. The first and second appear on the surface, so does the third if we carefully study the species. You never see a genuine Irishman with a small mouth. An Irishman having a big soul must have an organ large enough to express it. Nature's special seal on an Irishman's face is his mouth. This is why Irishmen excel in speech. Intense feeling and high intelligence are the secrets of an Irishman's oratory. You never find a speaker who moves the soul with a mouth like a teapot spout. The natural equipment for passing the commerce of the mind to other minds is a gateway large enough for the goods to get through. Some preachers would have been more useful if, when they were vaccinated, the doctor had slit their mouths an inch on either side. Now the mouth of Pat Dyer was an important part in his facial make-up. In fact, when he opened his mouth some people

said you could not see his face. If any children were near when he laughed, they became frightened and ran away.

Pat Dyer had a peculiar liking for a row. He could handle thirty-six inches of blackthorn with any man. His fingers always seemed to itch for the handling of a stick. It is said that one day before he left the "ould counthry" he went to the fair. Dressed in a pair of new brogues and with a new shillelagh under his arm, he walked towards the ruction ground, thrumming with his fingers on the stick he carried to the tune of "Larrigan's Ball."

Passing a tent where some of the boys were enjoying themselves with a bit of a shindy, he saw a bald head shining through a hole in the canvas. Turning up the whites of his eyes, he prayed the "Holy Virgin" to help him over the "temptation"; but it was no use, for, giving the blackthorn a twirl, he brought it down smash on the bare crown. There was an awful yell inside the tent. Jugs and tables flew, and a score of the men rushed out, each grasping his weapon of war.

"F'what would yez be doing, you omadhaun?" said Barney-na-Cappal, as he lifted his stick to lay the "inimy" low.

"Oh, begorra!" cried Shamus Fagan; "dhrop your stick, Barney. If it isn't one av our own bhoys! Ochone! ochone! Paddy Dyer, for why did yez sthrike your own father? Holy mother! but ye have nearly kilt him."

"Is it my father I hit?" said Dyer. "Well, bedad, I didn't know it was he. But, Shamus, if it 'ad been my own grandfather I couldn't av resisted the temptation."

In England shillelagh fights are not allowed. A high state of civilisation only permits the use of the fists to disfigure your neighbour's face, or the exercise of your feet for the dignified purpose of punching his ribs. This is called the noble art of self-defence.

Pat Dyer was a Roman Catholic. He was very sensitive on matters of religion. He prayed by the Pope and the priest, and swore by them too; he went to confession regularly, and after receiving absolution would get drunk on the strength of it. To him the kingdom of heaven was a place walled round with a single door on one side, of which the Pope held the key. His Holiness kept it hanging at his girdle. No "sowl" was allowed admittance but those who belonged to the true Church, and that was the Catholic.

His belief on this point one day received rather a rude shock. A bricklayer's labourer, named Bill Harvey, who worked for the same firm as Pat Dyer, came to the Mission, and was converted. Bill was made gloriously happy in the love of God. All the way home that Sunday night he praised the Lord; his religion filled his mouth as well as his heart. The next day, while Bill was at work, some sudden thought of the goodness of God led him to exclaim rather lustily, "Hallelujah!"

Pat Dyer, who was filling a load of bricks close by, was so startled, that he nearly lost his balance, upsetting the bricks on to the ground.

"Get out, you crazy divil!" said Dyer. "Mother of Moses! you nearly frightened me into a fit. What do you mane by shouting like that?"

"Mean?" said Bill Harvey; "blessed be God, I've got something to shout about, Paddy Dyer. God saved me last night. Hallelujah!"

"Saved you?" said the Irishman. "I suppose by that you mane you'll get to hiven when you die? Bah! you gossoon, it's all blarney. I suppose you went to that salvation shop of ould Flanagan's? Shure, an' he would be tellin' av yez a mouthful av lies. He's nothing but a traitor to the Holy Church. Trust me when I tell you there is no sowl can git into the kingdom av hiven widout the Pope's permission."

"How's that?" asked Bill bluntly.

"Well, you must know, then, that the kays av the kingdom are allus in the Pope's possession, an' no man can git in unless he unlocks the door."

"Is that all, Paddy Dyer?" said Harvey. "Well, you see, I went up, I found the door open, and I went in. Hallelujah! Anybody's welcome to the key of an open door."

Pat Dyer was nonplussed by Bill Harvey's logic, though not convinced. He only uttered an Irish oath, and put it down to another piece of the "devil's" heresy.

Whenever I walked down the slums where the Irish lived, Pat Dyer among the rest, I was an object of peculiar interest. The Irish surveyed me with as much curiosity as the natives of a strange land view a white man the first time they see one. My Irish name made some of them think that I was a renegade priest. Others even thought at first that I was an Irish priest, and carried the Pope's authority for my ministry. One afternoon I turned the corner of a dirty street rather sharply, when I saw just in front a party of Irish lads sitting in a row on the steps of a tenantless house. They were "rale beauties." They looked as though they had not been washed for three months. One lad seated in the centre of the group was using some very questionable language. The boy who sat at the end of the rank nearest to where I was approaching, perceiving me, placed his hand to his mouth and said in a loud whisper:—

"Mick, Mick, be aisy. Here comes Father Flanagan."

The words reached me, and I resolved to play the part of a father in God, and give the boys my blessing.

"Bow your heads, my darlings," I said, and leaving out the Virgin Mary, I gave them the triune benediction. I have no doubt there was as much virtue in the laying on of my hands as if his Holiness Pope Leo had gone through the same form. On several occasions, as I had gone through

the Irish quarter, I found that Pat Dyer was the leader of a set whose looks and words were not of a most assuring kind. The bitter feeling of the company appeared to focus itself in him. Several times when I passed I had heard him muttering curses beneath his breath. Once or twice as I had gone by he had spat on the ground immediately behind my boot heels. This practice became so usual that, when going down the street, I could tell by the volcanic eruption inside his big mouth what was going to happen. One day as I passed he spat with more vehemence on the ground than before, accompanying his action with such words as "Get out," "Apostate," "Protestant dog," "Traitor to the true Church," etc.

Walking on and smiling, in my heart I said :—

"Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt help me, we will stop his spitting."

For I believed that the way to find the one unbroken chord of his heart lay through a little Irish lad who bore his own name and called him "father."

Little Patsy Dyer was his only son. The mother of Patsy was dead, and though Pat Dyer the elder was a wild, wicked Irishman, and often left his boy on the street to provide for himself when he was drinking, deep down in his soul there was a warm place for little Patsy. By a ministry of mercy to the child I resolved to try and kill the enmity of the father. Our ministry to the children in the south-east of London has opened our way to every hole and corner of my parish.

The opportunity for which I longed soon came. It was a cold winter's day; the blinding sleet swept along the miserable streets, drifting into courts and alleys, sending the death shiver to many a heart; for keen, wintry weather to many of the poor people in the slums, weakened by disease and want, is as fruitful in death as the breath of the pestilence. I was doing an errand for Christ when I

suddenly stopped, for there on the opposite side of the street, clad in a pair of ragged trousers and a dirty shirt, was little Patsy Dyer. He was crouching against the wall close by the window of a baker's shop. He could not keep a limb still; his feet were almost dead with cold. One after the other he lifted them up from the sloppy pavement to keep them alive; his hands were thrust between his shirt and his body; a tear, pushed from his eye by the cold, lay frozen on his cheek. Poor little fellow! The sight of him made me shiver. Crossing the street, I said,—

"Are you cold, Patsy?"

"I am, sur," he answered, with chattering teeth.

"And are you hungry?"

"Yes, sur," said Patsy, "I am so hungry. I av had nuthin' to ate to-day, and last night I had no supper." And here the lad looked pitifully into my face.

"Where's your father, Patsy?" I asked.

"Shure, sur, an' he's on the drink. He left me in the strate, an' I had nowhere to slape last night."

"Should you like a warm and some coffee and a bun?"

"Shure, Mr. Flanagan, an' I should."

"Come on, then, Patsy, and I will see to you."

Prouder than the Queen on her Jubilee day, I marched down the old street, with two-feet-and-a-half of neglected Irish humanity behind me, muttering—

"We'll stop his spitting, Lord Jesus. I'll teach him to spit on the street after me. We'll 'clane' his mouth out, and teach him to behave like a 'gintleman.'"

Arriving at the coffee tavern, I said to the proprietor, "Mr. Archer, have you any hot coffee and buns?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Archer.

"Well, just let me have a big mug of coffee and a good big fat bun, with plenty of currants in, eh, Patsy?"

"Yes, sur," said Patsy, smiling as he fixed himself near the big fire.

I waited upon the lad myself, watched him eat, rubbed his cold feet and body until the blood got well into circulation, making him feel comfortable and cosy.

"I'll teach him to spit on the street after me."

A second supply of coffee and bun was ordered, for I said to myself, "We will stuff him well while we are about it." After the second consignment had vanished I asked Patsy if he could eat any more. He looked at me and gasped, "No, sur; I'se too full."

"Go on, then, now, and be a good boy."

Out of the coffee-house Patsy went, warm outside and full in, as an advertising agent for Jesus Christ.

The next day I went into the Catholic lodging-house where Pat Dyer used to sleep and take his meals. It was full of the lowest class of Irish labourers and tramps. In these houses the priest forbids the Bible to be read. As the house is registered, the priest cannot forbid our entrance, but if the inmates be in sympathy with him, he can forbid both prayer and the reading of God's Word. As soon as I opened the door the men looked up, and seeing me with the Bible under my arm, they began to mutter curses in low tones. I also heard such phrases as the following: "We'll av no Bible here!" "Git out, you turnskin!" "No divil's religion for us!" "You Protestant dog!" I could see that a storm was brewing. Before the big lodging-house fire stood Pat Dyer the elder. I took no notice of him, but offered a tract to the men who sat near me. Each one refused the offered tract; some swore, while others turned away. Suddenly Pat Dyer shouted out, "Boys, be aisy. Let no man in this house insult Mr. Flanagan. If he does, he will av to reckon wid me."

I thought, "The leaven's begun to work."

"What's the meaning of this?" I asked.

"Well, niver moind. I won't allow you to be insulted in this house while Paddy Dyer is present."

"But the last time I saw you, you spat on the street after me."

"Yes, God forgive me, I did. But I was mistaken in you; an' if you'll forgive me, sur, I'll niver do it again."

"But why?" I asked.

"Well, if you must av it, my lad Patsy tould me you found 'im on the strate yesterday hungry and cold, and you warmed and fed 'im. God Almighty bless you, sur! I'll niver spit after you again."

And he never did. From that day to this no man reverences me more. The ministry of love to his poor boy killed his prejudice, cleaned his mouth, and stopped his cursing. Glory be to God, there is wonderful power in mugs of coffee and big fat buns.

To-night or Never!

SOME years ago I was conducting a special evangelistic mission in one of the beautiful towns on the Lincolnshire coast. The meetings were well attended; and many of the godless sort were gathered in to hear the gospel. The Holy Spirit wrought conviction in many hearts, and a goodly number yielded to Christ.

Among my regular hearers was a young man who had sunk very low through profligate and vicious living. The youngest son of godly parents, he was bringing their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

I resolved to make him a special object of my attention and prayer. One night after I had had a long conversation with his mother he was present in the meeting. I am afraid that that night both preaching and praying were a little personal. At the close of the service the young fellow hurried from the chapel. Every night following he was there, and I could not but believe that the word of God was taking effect. The last day of the mission came. Passing along a street in the vicinity of the chapel, I saw on the opposite side of the way my young friend. I approached him and said:—

“My brother, I have been pleased to see you at the services; they close to-night; I hope we shall have the pleasure of your company.”

In a tone of firm determination he replied, “Yes, if I live, I shall be there to-night.” “Thank God!” I exclaimed inwardly; “there is something *real* behind that.”

The evening came. A large crowd was present. Joy beamed in many faces. The burden of sin had been lifted from many hearts. There sat the prodigal son—the son of many griefs and many prayers. The service was very powerful. The sword of the Lord smote right and left. An invitation was given to penitent souls to come forward for pardon. The first to rise and come to the front was our young friend. His face bathed in tears, he knelt before the people, and with a choked utterance tried to pray; but the power of articulation failed him. There were only sobs, and tears, and groans. Bending over him, I commenced to point him to Jesus. Suddenly he interrupted me with, “Oh, sir, I think it is a mockery; I can’t pray! How can I pray to God for forgiveness, having treated my father and mother as I have done? No, sir, I cannot ask God’s pardon until my parents have forgiven me.”

Looking over the audience as they bowed in prayer, I saw, in a pew near the door, the prodigal’s father. Hastening to him, I said: “My brother, your son is up at the front seeking mercy; I have been speaking to him, but he says it is useless to ask God’s forgiveness until he has received yours. Will you forgive him?”

The old man arose, and, passing from his pew down the aisle to the communion rail where his wandering boy knelt, he said with deep emotion:—

“Tom, my dear lad, I freely forgive you. The past shall be as though it had never been. Your mother is not present, but I speak the word on behalf of both of us. Now ask God to forgive you, and I know He will.”

A few minutes afterwards Tom was rejoicing in the forgiveness of his sins.

At the close of the meeting the young fellow rose to his feet, and, holding my hand with a firm grip, he said:—“I either had to decide for God to-night or never!”

The young man alone could tell the awful import of those words in his own case. A crisis had been reached. The supreme opportunity of life had come, and, thank God, he seized it for Christ.

And now, dear readers, is this true of you? Long pleaded with, long prayed for, yet undecided, remember that there is a spiritual tide in the affairs of men which, if taken at the flood, leads blessedly on to salvation. But the flood-tide of God's mercy will not keep at high-water mark for ever. There will come a recession of the waters of grace, and you will be left an eternal wreck if you do not lay hold of the salvation God offers.

“There is a line by us unseen,
Which crosses every path,
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.”

“To cross that limit is to die.”

But the voice of mercy cries to you to-day. Haste to Jesus! Him that cometh He will in no wise cast out. Blessed will it be if the reading of this story brings the joy of forgiveness to your heart!

Decide now, for it may be now or never.

"Thy Brother's Blood."

A REVIVAL was in full swing. The chapel at King's Ferry was a scene of glorious tumult. God was asserting His might and right over the human conscience. Reason and heart were being swayed by the Spirit of power.

It was an old-fashioned revival. There was swing and go in it. Everybody was at liberty to sing or pray. The confusion was divine. Criticism was disarmed; results made it powerless. Every man claimed his right by prayer to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Such revivals are not popular now, but they will be soon. The spiritual rebound from the materialism of the age will be startling. The formal, cut-and-dried, so-much-per-yard, specially-got-up revival will be swept from the programme of the Church. We have rediscovered the historic Christ; the next thing to discover is the lost genius of revivalism.

At King's Ferry the convictions wrought by the Holy Spirit were deep, prayers were earnest, faith was mighty, and shouts were loud. Lung-power, after all, counts for something. A sea full of holy water, though blessed by the Pope himself, is not so potent to exorcise the devil as a big hallelujah from a sanctified throat. Every soul-winner whose work lies among the rocks knows the utility of a good pair of lungs. John says, "There was a noise in heaven," and certainly there was a noise during King's Ferry revival.

Night by night the chapel was crowded. The congregations consisted chiefly of the artisan class. Genteel people don't care for revivals like that at King's Ferry (see Luke v. 29, 32). The company is not select enough. The rules of etiquette are discarded by the people who attend. The means used to create the revival at King's Ferry were ordinary: deep heart-searching among saints; self-purification, leading to more perfect consecration to God and firmer faith in His promises. These things led to holier zeal and larger service. At first the "signs" were wanting, but importunate pleading and persistent faith prevailed; and now the whole town was moved by the power of God.

Chief among the members at King's Ferry Chapel was Jabez Storrier. He was a man well-to-do. He was a grocer and general dealer. The business was at his finger-ends, he having grown up with it from the beginning. He was a cool, calculating man. His level head was the balance-wheel of many a meeting in the church. He was good at figures; hence, as might be expected, he was the financier of the church. In fact, he held several offices in the Society. The minister loved him for his moderation and cool, dispassionate judgment. Oft, when having a friendly chat, the minister would speak of him as the "indispensable" member. Jabez Storrier's evenly-balanced nature safeguarded him against those peculiar forms of temptation which easily beset and master some lives. He never touched extremes. He walked the "middle" line. He had moderation on the brain. His prudence bordered on insanity; for your calm, prudential man, with his six reasons against a new departure and motion of adjournment in order to hunt up a seventh, may be as big a fool and fanatic as the most passionate enthusiast.

Victor Hugo would have classed Jabez Storrier among the "madmen of moderation." Such men would do for

the stage-coach, but not for the steam-engine. The devil can run a mile while they are pulling their stockings on.

Jabez Storrier was a very accommodating man. He would go with you on any question the length of his tape on either side of the commandment, so long as there was no "brimstone" about. But at the least smell of fire he would rush to the law and the testimony. Yet Jabez Storrier was a good man. But his goodness was not equalised. It leaned more to the just than the merciful, excepting when "self" was under consideration; then his morality was india-rubber morality—as elastic as you please.

Jabez Storrier was respected, I will not say loved. His membership with King's Ferry Society dated from its commencement. Many had come and gone, but he remained. So familiar was he to the place that many people called the meeting-house "Storrier's Chapel."

People who had played fast and loose with their opportunities, and left life's work to the closing breath, often sent for Jabez to give them a safe hitch over the last stile. For if men sup with the devil, they like to breakfast with God. Many a prayer had Jabez offered when death and the devil were scrambling for the soul.

Jabez Storrier, with all his faults, had the welfare of King's Ferry Society deeply at heart. He longed for the prosperity of Zion. He was delighted when souls were being converted; though, if the culture of the new life in converts demanded much self-denial on *his* part, he demurred. If a new convert required much coddling, he would let him go. He had little sympathy with the "weak ones"; he never required it himself, and they ought not. He judged everybody after his own standard, and if they did not come up to it, all the worse for them.

Let me repeat, the revival at King's Ferry was in full

swing. Many had been converted. Among the rest was Charlie Walker.

Charlie had been married twelve months. His wife was a young woman of pure and simple life, upon whose unsophisticated and impressionable nature evil or good, according to Providence, might easily and speedily work its will. One child had been born to them—a daughter.

Mrs. Walker before marriage had been taught to pray, and after marriage she attempted to continue the practice, but Charlie laughed, and she blushed and ceased. Charlie Walker was not a wild fellow. His great sin was indifference. His disposition was pliable; like his wife, he was an easy catch for sinner or saint. "Religion might or might not be needful; for himself, he was not sufficiently interested to inquire." "It no doubt was a good cordial for a dying hour, but for practical life it was a burden. If it was a 'necessity,' he would risk it until later on."

But King's Ferry revival changed his ideas. The sweep of holy influence which was abroad cleared those cobweb notions from his brain. A quick Teacher is the Holy Ghost. How swiftly He can demolish the refuge of lies! Intellectual castles, based on error, melt away like shadows in a dream when God speaks to the soul. One night, when the revival was at its height, Charlie entered the chapel, "just," as he said, "to look on a bit." But before the service closed God helped him to "look up," and

"He saw One hanging on a tree
In agony and blood."

The sight of the crucified Christ transfigured him. From that good hour, life, thought, feeling, desire—all were changed.

With streaming eyes and melting heart, and in unison with many others who had experienced the same change, he sang:—

"My chains fell off, my heart was free ;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

That night there was joy in heaven, and joy of a very boisterous but happy kind in King's Ferry Chapel.

One of the first to salute the new converts was Jabez Storrier. His hand-shake and hearty "God bless you!" evoked glad smiles and one or two loud "Amens."

The revival ended. A purer life in the Church and large additions to her numbers formed part of the results. The Christ-presence in so many new hearts beautified and blessed many a home where hopeless misery had reigned. The effect of the work of grace upon Jabez Storrier's heart it would be hard to define. Certainly the "*Cross*" had not rooted itself more deeply in his nature ; the outward signs were a quicker step in walking and a louder tone in prayer—that was all.

The change in Charlie Walker's life was manifest to all. It was a passage from darkness to light. There was a difference at home. Charlie's wife could now kneel. Things seemed wonderfully changed. The hearthstone was an altar for prayer and praise.

His wife and child, with Jesus Christ, possessed all his love. Charlie's first act after conversion was to sign the pledge. This he did, not under human pressure, but in response to the Holy Spirit's call. There was no controversy in his soul between himself and God upon the subject. At love's first sweet appeal he banished strong drink from his life. His knowledge of the Christian life was new. His opinion of the Church was high. No veil of inconsistency dimmed the fair vision of his thought. To him all Christians were saints, and saint to his mind was but one grade lower than angel.

For months Charles Walker's life was one flow of peace, broken only by one or two temptations to return to a moderate use of beer. But no ; to touch the glass was to

hug the serpent. The danger was too great, so the desire was crushed.

Two years rolled by, and Charlie Walker was still in the good way. Jabez Storrier and he met every Sabbath in the same school. With that exception they very seldom saw each other. Walker had commenced business for himself, and things were prospering. His home was the abode of sweetness. Mary Walker rejoiced in her husband's integrity. Grace and beauty held sway. Two children now gathered at their feet—links of gold, God-given, which bound their hearts more closely together. Charlie had oft been tempted by appetite and friend to break his pledge, but he held firm. Jabez Storrier and he had never discussed the temperance question, but Charlie's opinion of Mr. Storrier was so high, that he never dreamed that he was aught else but a total abstainer.

One day business called Charlie Walker to that part of the town where Jabez Storrier lived, for he and Storrier lived at opposite ends.

Shouldering his tools, he set off at a brisk pace to attend to the piece of work he had in hand. The morning was bright and clear, but cold. Charlie was happy as a bird. He had everything his heart desired—a loving wife, two happy children, a comfortable home, a good wage, and a rising business. As he thought of these things he commenced unconsciously to sing,

"Oh, happy day that fixed my choice."

Several persons as they passed looked round in wonderment and smiled, not knowing the cause of his joy.

Suddenly Charlie looked up, and there, about a hundred yards in front of him, was Jabez Storrier. He was going in the same direction. Charlie Walker quickened his pace that he might have the pleasure of a salute and a few minutes of his company. When he was within about fifty

yards of Jabez Storrier, the latter came up to a large public-house. Without looking either way Storrier walked in, as though it was his custom, which it was. Charlie for a moment was staggered. Was he not mistaken in the man? He had not seen the face. It might be someone like him. No; he felt sure it was Storrier. He slackened his steps, drew his cap close over his eyes, and walked by the public-house door. Yes; he was right. There was Jabez just in the act of draining a glass of beer.

Charlie Walker passed on and reasoned. Had he not drawn too strict a line? Who was he that he should oppose his ideas of Christian morality to a man's like Storrier? He had often questioned whether he was not going too far in denying himself a glass of beer. Jabez Storrier's example decided him. With his dinner that day he took a pint of liquor.

So the tempter won; coming in the guise of a Christian man, he hooked his victim. It is the old tale. Charlie Walker tasted, and the liking grew. Gradually he went down. Prayer ceased; business was ruined. Friends tried for a time to arrest his course, but in vain. The curse spread to his home and wife and children; the pretty villa in the best part of the town was given up, and the furniture sold. They went to live in a lower part, where the surroundings were more obscure.

* * * * *

Eleven years have passed away since the day of Charlie Walker's conversion. Jabez Storrier is still a member of the King's Ferry Chapel. He leads class, and gives out the notices; and—what to him is more commonplace still—he takes his glass of beer. “No man has ever seen *him* the worse for drink.” “The very thought is an insult.” “And if everybody would only do as he”—etc., etc., etc.

Some of those who had been converted during King's Ferry revival had fallen, while a few still bore witness to the reality of the work. It was a sad time when the minister and leaders considered the cases of those who had back-slidden from grace. No name excited more pity than Charles Walker's. Jabez Storrier expressed his sorrow at the weakness of the man in giving way to temptation. But the discipline of the Church must be maintained, and Charles Walker's name was erased from the roll. It was a trying time for Jabez. He and the minister that night had an extra pipe and glass in order to settle their nerves. Any connection between the fall of Charles Walker and the example of Jabez Storrier was as far from their thought as heaven is from hell.

Yes; it was eleven years since the day of Charlie Walker's conversion, and during that time what changes! It was a dull, cold day in November. Down a dark slum street in King's Ferry a man was dying. The hovel where he lay was situate in the darkest corner of the lowest alley which opened out of the street. Within the wretched den was a perfect picture of misery and want. Hunger, gaunt and grim, was enthroned. Dirt and disorder characterised everything. Two children, scarcely discernible in the natural darkness of the place, were fighting in a corner for a hard crust which one of them had just picked up out of the gutter outside. Nearly every pane of glass was broken, and each hole contained a plug of dirty rags to keep out the cold. A woman, with grimy face and uncombed hair, was on her knees blowing with her mouth at the broken grate, trying to create a little heat in the exhausted cinders. On a broken tea-chest, in the centre of the apartment, was a greasy bottle, in the neck of which stood a tallow candle, the flame flickering fitfully as the November wind swept through the chinks of the dilapidated room.

Hark ! was that the moaning of the wind ? No, it could not be. It sounded like a human voice. Hark ! Again it is heard ; this time louder. It proceeded from a corner of the room. At the second groan the woman ceased blowing and looked towards the corner referred to, where was what appeared to be a heap of dirty rags.

"What do you want ?" she said in a disagreeable voice.

There was no answer.

The rags moved, and two skeleton arms and a human face appeared.

But what a face ! Hard, callous, dissipated, diseased, like a high-road on which the grinding traffic has run for years. Do we know that face ? Alas ! yes. It is the face of Charlie Walker, the once bright, happy soul, Sunday-school teacher, member of King's Ferry Church, now dying in this den of shame. And is that Mary Walker, the bright-eyed, simple-hearted girl whom, on that sunny morning twelve years ago, he led to the altar ? Yes, the same ; but oh, how changed ! And are those the two sweet children, born into pure surroundings, and nurtured for the first brief period of life in prayer ? Yes, the same, and yet not the same.

Were facts not ever before us, we could scarcely believe that in so short a time evil could spoil so much good.

Another moan came from the corner. The children ceased fighting.

"Oh ! oh !!" A convulsive clutch at the rags, and a wild stare round the den accompanied these words. Gradually there oozed from the skin of the man's forehead drops of leaden-coloured sweat, which, combining, trickled down the side of his face to the floor.

"*Drink ! Drink !! Drink !!! I must have drink. Curse you, give me some drink !*" Horrible were the signs and looks which followed these exclamations. The woman, afraid, kept clear of the corner. She was used

to scenes of violence and blasphemy, and she would have fled into the court, but she knew that weakness made him powerless. After another violent paroxysm, the man lay still.

The parish doctor had left the day before, saying all hope was gone, and that he could not last more than another day. And now, as night crept on, there swept before Charlie Walker's disordered brain visions, which combined a mingling of the past and the future. He lay with closed eyes, his head supported by a broken box, on which was placed an old coat. In the corner of one eye was what seemed like a tear; perhaps it was a drop of sweat. His fingers clutched convulsively once or twice, as though he were grasping for a human throat. Several times the features were distorted with rage, and low muttered curses escaped his lips.

At length his eyes opened. A wild light played in them for a moment, then passed, and once more reason asserted her right.

"Jenny," he said feebly.

(Jenny was the name of his eldest girl.)

"Jenny," he said again, "come here."

The girl timidly and fearfully approached the corner.

"Are you there?" said the man.

"Yes, father; what do you want with me?"

The man took a long stare at his child, then his gaze passed to her sister, then to his wife, and closing his eyes, an awful groan burst from his lips. *Tears formed silently* on his cheeks; faster they came, until the uncontrollable anguish of his heart broke forth in a loud, bitter wail.

The emotion ceased. He was now calm—deadly calm.

"Jenny," said the man again, "do you know the big store in Dorking Street?"

"Yes, I know," said Jenny.

"Do you know who lives there?"

"Yes, I do," answered the girl; "it is Mr. Storrier, who goes to King's Ferry Chapel."

"That's right. Well, I want you to go to the store and tell Mr. Storrier your father is dying, and he wants to see him at once."

A moment's toilette in the shape of a dirty, threadbare shawl, which did duty for the household, being hastily thrown over her shoulders, and Jenny stepped out into the dark alley. The wind was blustering; the night was dark; not a star was visible. The gin-shops were in full swing. Passing a house, she heard the strains of a hymn; it sounded to her like far-off music from the city of God. Arriving at the store, she ascended the steps which led up to the door of Jabez Storrier's private residence, and knocked. A servant answered.

"Please, is Mr. Storrier in?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

"Father is dying, and wants to see him."

"Come into this room, my child," said the servant. "There now, warm your hands; I will tell Mr. Storrier your message."

A few minutes, and Mr. Storrier came. One glance at the almost naked body of the child led him to exclaim, "Dear me!" and a look of pain crossed his face.

"Your father dying? And where does he live, my girl?"

"*In Red Cow Alley*, please, sir." Jabez Storrier had heard of the place, and from report he knew it to be the most disreputable spot in the whole town. And for a moment he wondered who the man could be that sent for him from such a place. To minister to the dying was oft his business, but this was the first message he had ever received from that low quarter. He had not the remotest idea what had become of Charlie Walker. He had heard vague reports about him for a little while after his fall, but

for several years he had dropped completely out of Storrier's memory.

"Just a moment, my child, and I shall be ready to go with you," said Mr. Storrier, leaving the room to put on his greatcoat and muffler.

Half an hour's threading through the winding streets brought Jabez Storrier and Jenny to the street in which was Red Cow Alley. The desolation around appalled Jabez. It was like entering a new world. He never dreamed that human beings were huddled together under such conditions. He had lived all his life in King's Ferry, but never knew such wretched spots were existent. At last they reached the dark court or alley where Jenny lived. It was near midnight. Everything was still, but only for a few moments, for anon a muffled scream would sound on the night air, and then the dim murmur of voices in fierce contention would be heard. The broken gas-lamp at the entrance to the alley was lightless; the wind had extinguished the flame. The place was in utter darkness. This was not of much consequence to the regular tenants. The distinction between light and darkness in the slum is not so clearly marked as in the better streets. With Jenny's guidance, Jabez, after stumbling over several heaps of refuse, reached the door of her—home.

Within the low hovel Charlie Walker lay gasping for breath. Several times since Jenny had gone he had burst forth into strange fits of devilish passion. Grim spectres passed before his vision, at which he struck, and which he cursed. Once or twice he called the names of his wife and children; then, with fearful gesture, he would fling an oath at the Almighty. When his raving ended, he would pass into a period of calm. Just now he was quiet. The gloom of the hovel had become more dense; the candle flickered in the neck of the bottle. The fire had resisted the woman's efforts, and the grate was cold. Moans

came more frequently from the heap in the corner. The eyes of the dying man, so soon to be sightless, glistened in the candle-light like two balls of silver. His fingers, all bone, held together by skin, curled and straightened in a peculiar manner. Now and again Charlie Walker fixed his eyes upon the door. At length, after a deeper groan, he spoke as though to himself—

“Will he come? Shall I be robbed of the pleasure of cursing him before I am damned? No; God Almighty will let me blast him before I die. He will! He will!”

These awful words were spoken with uplifted fist, and in a tone of voice which seemed like the shriek of a lost soul. The man’s face was fearful to behold. The child tore her mother’s dress in a clutch of momentary fear. The mother moved further from the bundle in the corner.

A knock at the door, and Jenny with Jabez Storrier entered. The sound caught the ear of Charlie Walker, and his gaze pierced the gloom. A moment’s look at Storrier standing near the centre of the den was followed by a piercing cry, like the scream of a vulture when it sights its prey. The cry was succeeded by a peal of laughter—hollow, metallic, awful, like the rattling of bones in a sepulchre. Jabez Storrier started as though a bullet had struck him. His face grew pallid with fear. He had visited many a chamber of death, but none like this. The place seemed close on the confines of hell. His first thought was to flee the accursed spot. But the man’s soul—what of that?

Pulling himself together, he approached the heap of rags. The man had closed his eyes, and was breathing heavily.

“May I pray with you?” said Storrier.

At this the man opened his eyes and burst into another fit of demoniacal laughter.

Jabez started back as though stung by a serpent.

“He must be wandering,” thought Jabez. Once more drawing near the corner, he said—

"Can I help you?"

"No!" answered the man with peculiar vehemence.

"Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing!"

"Did you send for me?"

"To curse you! yes, to curse you! Do you know me, Jabez Storrier?" The man's eyes gleamed with fury. He raised himself up. It was nature's last effort.

Jabez increased the distance between himself and the rags as he answered, "No, I do not know you, my friend; I never remember seeing you before."

"Don't 'friend' me, Jabez Storrier. Do you remember Charlie Walker? Curse you! I wish I had power to reach your throat. But I shall meet you in hell, and I will torment you then. See," and the man pointed to the miserable form of his wife, "I remember when *she* was pure and handsome, when I loved her for her goodness. I led her to the altar twelve years ago, a happy bride. I vowed to love and cherish her, and for a time I did; but hell got hold of my heart, and made me a brute. I have starved the life out of her body, and beaten the beauty out of her face. It was not I who did it; it was the drink. And, Jabez Storrier, you see those children, soon to be fatherless, this miserable hovel, and *me*, ruined in body, with hell in my heart already, and you! you!! you!!! are the cause of it all."

The man was furious while speaking. His voice was broken by gaspings for breath. His matted hair hung partly over his forehead. His eyes were bloodshot, and ringed with the blue of death, his hands outstretched, as though he would tear his enemy limb from limb.

"Curse you! Curse you!! Curse you!!!" he screamed. "The curse of Charlie Walker follow you to your dying day!"

The effort had exhausted him. His head sank upon the

pillow of rags. The wind moaned dismally ; it was nature moaning over a departing soul.

Jabez Storrier's blood froze. Such words had never been spoken to him before. At first he had ascribed the man's ravings to a disordered brain, but the mention of his own name had dispelled this illusion. His mind was torture. He longed to flee from the accursed place. With this intention he made for the door.

He had just seized the latch, when the dying man once more raised himself up. "Hold !" he cried. "Jabez Storrier, you think I'm mad ; but I am not, my mind is clear. Listen to my dying words."

A terribly calm and earnest manner possessed him. The gloom of the den was deepening. The flame of the candle was fast expiring. Like frightened sheep, the two children cowered in the farthest corner. The wife and mother stood near the bundle of rags—as near as her fears would allow. Jabez Storrier, held by a power he could not resist, stood by the door.

"Do you remember," Charlie Walker continued, "the revival at King's Ferry Chapel twelve years ago? Ah! you wince. Hush! listen to me. Many were converted, and I was one among them. I can never forget those days. I shall think of them in ——." Here the trembling of his body was so violent that speech failed. Calming himself a little, he proceeded: "I had just married and commenced business. My home was heaven. My wife was the queen of my heart ; my children were my angels. I looked to you as an example. You were my ideal Christian ; everything you did was right in my sight. I signed the pledge ; my conscience told me that it was wrong to drink. One day I saw you enter a public-house. You had something to drink. I was surprised at first, but that feeling wore off. You drank ; why should not I? I tasted ; the liking grew upon me. I sank lower. Religion, business, home, all went. Misery followed

misery. And this is the end of it all." He groaned. "No, not all. For me there waits a hell of pain; for my wife and children a life of misery; and you, Jabez Storrier, are the cause of it all. With my dying breath I lay at your feet my children's misery, my wife's shame, and my own damnation!"

His eyes glittered with a strange light. He clutched convulsively at the air; then, throwing up his bony arms, he shrieked, "Lost! lost! Jabez Storrier, I'm lost. At the judgment-seat of God I shall want you to answer for my soul!"

A heavy fall upon the rags, a gurgle in the throat, a faint rising of blood to the lips, and all was over.

My Critics, and How they were Beaten

MANY remarkable incidents, both grave and gay, tender and severe, pathetic and pungent, have been compiled into religious literature from the lives of evangelists and others, who, by earnest personal service, have sought to win men to Jesus Christ—incidents which have been read with wonder by many and incredulity by not a few.

In the history of an earnest, soul-saving preacher of the gospel, "truth" is most certainly "stranger than fiction." The records of evangelism read like a romance. Tragedy and comedy are blended together in strange confusion. Divinity and devilry stand out in startling contrast. One of the most instructive and profitable parts of religious biography is that which deals with the struggles and triumphs of gospel pioneers, men who have had no snug church made to hand, but who alone, like Carey in India or Clowes in England, have challenged the sin and sorrow of a town or a nation, and, by the power of love and disinterested service, have successfully combated the evils of the people and built up a community of saints. When the experiences of such men are given to the world they read to the uninitiated like a tale of the imagination. What Don Quixote is in the realm of fiction, the lives of some evangelists are in the realm of truth.

Numbers of people in reading the records of evangelism

think that many of the statements are much exaggerated, and that the writer's fancy has over-coloured his pages. Even the "strange tales" of good John Ashworth have been looked upon by some as largely embellished with fiction, if not positively untrue. Some time ago I was in a town where a man, having read several of Ashworth's tales, handed the last one received back to the visitor with the remark that "he had read enough of such lies"; yet we surely believe the writer when he informs us that they were the outcome of his personal experience, and that the pictures were rather underdrawn than otherwise. Even in these prosy, humdrum times, to some of us exciting scenes in religious work have not ceased. The public prints do not publish everything. There are evangelists who keep the divine secret to themselves. Only now and again is the curtain of this Holy of holies lifted, and then the glory is seen. Many of our Churches are too stereotyped. Others are dying of "gigmanity." A mock respectability makes them the laughing-stock of hell. False etiquette is destroying thousands. The ideas of many of our Church leaders are too cramped; their method is as straitened as a China-woman's foot. The Holy Ghost has no room to operate. There is enough cold in some Churches to turn the world into ice. Our sanctuaries are shunned by the "great unwashed"; they would sooner sit in the "Black Horse" and drink "fourpenny" all day long than go to church, not because they are prejudiced against the truth or the Christ, but because when they do go they receive a chill which sickens them for half a lifetime. The work of saving the lost is scarcely clean enough for some of us. Hundreds of Christians would sooner foot it on the boards of a dance saloon than visit the lost and dying. But we will dismiss this moralising and attend to the business in hand.

At the time when the following incident occurred, I did not occupy the most honourable position of a Primitive

Methodist minister ; I had a roving commission. I was my own quarter-day, district meeting, and conference. No ecclesiastical assembly had ever passed me through its sacred forms of ordination. My call to preach the gospel was, like Paul's, direct from heaven. My credentials were sinners converted and believers sanctified. I desire no others now, excepting the fruits of holiness in my own life. I began to preach immediately after I was converted, in the street, on the doorstep, in the courts, and in the market-place ; anywhere and everywhere when opportunity and time allowed, I exhorted sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

The enlightenment consequent upon conversion led me to change my occupation. I passed from the business to which I served my apprenticeship, to work in the coal-mine. The change was great. My delicate hands were often stained with blood, and my poor body, cramped and tortured by the small spaces of the mine, sadly rebelled. But, by degrees, I became used to my new conditions. Tact of mind and agility of limb soon led me to distance my compeers, until I was acknowledged to be the head man of the gang. Many, many blessed hours have I had in the dark mine. Oft, when through quickness and skill I had "done my stint" before my fellows, the few minutes left would be spent in prayer. The "cobbin" to me has often been the gate of heaven. At times a little banter would be exercised at my expense. "What, Flanagan, art ta praying again?" I would hear sometimes when engaged for a few minutes with my God. But in the hour of danger and need they would generally seek my protection and advice.

I can never forget my first testimony for Christ in the mine. After the men descend the shaft, they receive their lamps and then break the neck of the distance they have to travel underground. At the entrance to their gateway, just off the main road, they assemble for what they call a "button" (a short rest) before going in to work. As honesty is the

code of honour among thieves, so the "button" is the code of honour among colliers. A man who did not respect it would be considered a scapegoat. The first morning I sat among them my cheeks burned as I listened to their conversation. It was both blasphemous and filthy. Every obscene remark was received with roars of laughter. My blood boiled; I said nothing. The next morning came, and the same conversation commenced, when I rose up and said:—

"Now, lads, see here, I sat with you for the first time yesterday morning, and your conversation was unclean. You cursed God again and again. I said nothing, thinking it would not occur again. But now, this morning, you have begun the same kind of talk, and I want to tell you that I'm a Christian, and I can't sit here and hear God cursed any longer. So from this time I shall not sit here; I shall go higher up and sit by myself."

These words raised a storm about my ears. "He's a Methody!" "Boo, owd watter barrel!" "Hallelujah!" "Goo on, owd parson, and sit by thysen!" These and such-like phrases were plentifully bestowed upon me. But I held firm. For several weeks I sat alone, until one morning, when passing through them, I was asked to sit with them. I did, the condition being that they should not swear. Never again were my ears offended by their foul talk. If one happened to make a slip, his mate would reprove him with some such words as "Now then, canna thou behave thysen?"

The mine where I worked was served on what is called the "long wall system." The whole bed of coal was headed from one end to another. This long length was then divided into smaller lengths, or sections; these were termed "stalls." These stalls would be let to three or four petty contractors called "butties," and again these butties would employ day-men to assist in getting the coal

and sending it to "bank." The number of men in each stall varied according to its length, or the difficulty experienced in getting the coal. In the stall where I worked there were six men, sometimes seven. Four of these were butties. Altogether there were about four hundred men and boys in the mine.

At the time of which I write School Boards had not come into existence. The intellectual status of the miners was low. Shut out like Milton from

"Day and vernal morn,
And flocks and herds, and
Summer's rose. But
Cloud instead and ever-during dark
Surrounds . . ."

Being acquainted chiefly with the black face of the coal and the dull swing of the light pick, it was no wonder if their minds grovelled amid baser things. A man who could read was a novelty, and his opinions were considered almost infallible. Yet, even in the dark mine—to the glory of God it must be said—there were men who by the Spirit of Christ were indeed diamonds in the rough, and whose lives shone with the lustre of heaven. In those deep Hadean abodes, unnoticed and unknown, they bore splendid witness to the truth.

It will be plain to the reader that amid such associations a conversion like mine would make no small stir. A few weeks after I had professed Christ, it was circulated pretty freely that I "was converted." This fact evoked a mixed manifestation of feeling. Some laughed, others swore, while a few jeered at me for being such a fool. Once or twice my cheeks turned hot, and my hand instinctively bent into a fist. But, by the grace of God, I was saved from falling. Not having much time to read, and but few books even if I had had the time, I used to snatch what leisure moments were allowed to me when not working or sleeping in order to instruct my mind, which, alas! had so sadly run to waste.

My first attempt at self-tuition was as follows :—

Before leaving home in the morning, I would place the Bible open before me and read a single verse, say six times, then close the book and repeat it again, thus making it my own. Then leaving home, I would comfort my heart all the day on that particular passage. The first portion of the Word I learned thus was Psalm ciii. My heart was all hallelujah when I was converted, and I desired Scripture that was in harmony with the high ecstasy of my heart. Psalm ciii. was the very portion I needed. There are twenty-two verses in it, and it took me twenty-two days to learn it. My custom was, as stated before, to take one verse a day with me to work and comfort my soul with its strengthening power all the day. So the first day I went to work repeating, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" When the men swore, I would burst out with "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" The first day while at work a piece of rock fell from the roof and sadly damaged my scalp. Before the devil had half a chance, I burst out with "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" A powerfully built collier who stood near looked at me with a strangely comical stare, and said: "Bless the Lord? Ah! I should think so. It's all bosh! Tha on'y says that to keep thysen from swearing." I answered with another "Bless the Lord," etc.

But that psalm was wonderfully helpful to me in this way. In the mine there was a man named J. H., a professed atheist. He had read pretty largely. But his reading embraced mostly secularist prints and *Reynolds'*. He had touched the Bible, but, like many of his class, his knowledge of its teaching was of the most defective and meagre kind. He was both Pope and demagogue. He gave the cue to many of the opinions and beliefs of the

miners around him. J. H. to many of them was the highest embodiment of wisdom. I had heard of this man as a scoffer at religion. His delight was to laugh belief out of the heart of any young fellow who had been brought to Christ. Several had given way because of his sneers. How mighty is a laugh for good or evil! I pursued all possible expedients in order to shun him, for I was afraid, if he attempted any of his tricks with me, I might forget the spirit I was of and floor him.

Alas! one day the shaft was damaged, and we were summoned to the surface. At the bottom of the shaft I came across a large crowd of miners who were delayed through some defect in the winding-gear. There, right in the midst, was J. H., whose wink at the men and wicked leer led me to expect a storm.

I prayed God I might not do some act of violence.

He commenced: "I say, mates, have you heard that Flanagan has got converted?"

"Oh, we han," chorused the men.

J. H.: "Is it true, Flanagan, that you've turned Bible believer?"

"Yes," I said, "I have given my life to God, if that is what you mean."

J. H.: "Oh, so you've turned Christian? I suppose then you believe what the Bible says, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

J. H.: "Well, that shows what a fool you are."

My blood was getting hot, but I continued praying. "How do you make out I'm a fool?" I asked.

J. H.: "Why, in these days it is only old women and fools that believe the Bible."

"Indeed!" I said.

J. H.: "Yes, that's it. You know, Flanagan, what I believe. I believe in a man doing as he likes." (This to him meant doing all unholy things.) "Besides, even

if your Bible is true, I can prove from it that your God can't send me to hell."

"Can you?" I answered nervously, for I knew how easily he could ruffle my mind.

J. H.: "Yes, I can, even from its own words. For it says 'that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting,' and now if the mercy of God is for ever, and there is no end to it, how can He send me to hell?" And, with a triumphant flourish of his hand, he expected me to collapse, but I did not. Why? Because the quotation he gave is from the very Psalm which it had taken me twenty-two days to learn. As soon as he had made the quotation, my form straightened, my nerves settled, and I turned upon him calm, but sure. The colliers had screwed their faces for a laugh, but they waited for my answer.

"John," I said, "you quote the Bible wrong. You dissect and maim the truth according to your own dwarfed ideas, and then hold up your false caricature and say, 'See, this is what the Bible says.' Now, will you please give the whole passage? Half the truth falsely quoted is sometimes as bad as a barefaced lie. Give us the other half. You set yourself up as being very wise; now I want our mates to-day to see that you are not as wise as you seem; in fact, that you are only a fool in disguise."

He looked very much amazed, and putting on a bold air, he said, "I have given you all there is."

"No, you have not, and if you do not know what the Bible really says, why do you show your ignorance by quoting it? Never again attempt to teach those who are your superiors in knowledge. What the Bible says is: 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear Him,' and not upon infidels and blasphemers such as you."

Poor J. H. was beaten. His folly was apparent to all.

The laugh prepared for me I never received, and ever after the man respected me as one who, so far as the Bible was concerned, was much more learned than he.

I had only been converted about five months, when the Rev. W. Suttle, now of Poplar, with the officials, thought I ought to come on the plan as an exhorter. This gave me a much wider field of usefulness. Commissioned by the Church, I began to spread the gospel tidings everywhere. In the chapels, on the high-road, in sick-rooms, at the mine, I told of Him who had saved me.

Many of the miners were sorely puzzled to know how I made my "sermons." Strange and crude notions were advanced to account for my talking power, and many a hearty laugh I have had at the reasons advanced.

One Monday morning, after preaching the day before at a place some six or seven miles from home, I went to work feeling a little tired. I had not been at work long before the man who worked next to me, whose name was "Bill," said:—

"I say, Jem, weer wor tae yesterday? Wor tae ha'ut praching?"

"Yes, Bill," I answered, "I was, and a good time I had. Souls were saved, glory be to God."

"An' weer wor tae?" asked Bill.

"At Cinder Hill," I said.

"At Cinder Hill!" said Bill in astonishment. "Mi hi' ni', thae harned thi bacon. What toime did tae get whoam?"

"About twelve o'clock."

"Aba't what?" gasped Bill. "Well, I niver! Dost mean to say as it wor twelve o'clock afore thou got whoam?"

"I do," said I.

"Well, then," said Bill, "I tell thi what I think aba't it: thar goes ha'ut praching on't Sundays an' comes to work

tired as a dog, and t' result is, thou canna lift as many coals as thou should do, an' we hae to suffer. I dunno belave it's reight."

"You mustn't think, Bill," said I, "that my work for God unfits me for work. My toil for Him on the Sabbath renews my strength, and I feel my work at the pit to be a pleasure. But let me ask you a question: Where were you yesterday?"

"Mae!" said he. "Well, I went up to 'Bricklayer's Arms' and had a pint or two of owd four."

"And what time did you arrive home?"

"About eleven. But thae knows, Flanagan, I hadna to walk twelve miles like thae."

"No, Bill, you had not. But what are twelve miles to a man who has a good conscience and God's smile? Have you got those?"

"No; I wish I had."

"Then," I said, "I think I am both the stronger and the richer man."

Our conversation ended here, Bill seeming to reflect seriously upon what had been said.

The greater part of the men with whom I worked resided in a small village situate on one side of the large estate under which the coal beds lay. The squire who owned the estate had built houses for the accommodation of his own workmen; and these, being grouped together, formed the village of M. The spiritual wants of the people were attended to by the Established Church and the Wesleyans. At the time of which I write the members of the Wesleyan Society resolved to do something to awaken the people to a sense of their spiritual danger. To accomplish this they arranged for a series of special services, and appointed a different speaker for each evening. Being asked to take one evening, I consented to do so. My appointment was on the Wednesday evening following the Monday referred to when I had my conversation with Bill.

On the Tuesday morning it was rumoured through the mine that I was going to preach at M. the next evening. At eleven o'clock we rested a short time for meals, and all the men repaired to the gate, or road, to have their "snap." Thinking it would save me from a lot of chaff, I sat in the "gobbin" by myself. I was within earshot of the other party; I could not help but listen to the following conversation between two of the miners:—

Enoch: "I say, Johnnie, what's think?"

Johnnie: "I dunna know, Enoch."

Enoch: "Well, thae knows we 'av' often talked about Jem's preaching, an' wondered how hae made his sermons, an' we 'av' wondered what hae talked about when hae went to prach."

Johnnie: "I'm puttin' thae off, Enoch; but I'll tell thae what my firm 'pinion is about job. I belave he mak's his sermons up about us. Thou knows he'll begin wi' a bit o' what he calls his own 'sperience, and then wind up wi' telling t' folks what a wicked class we are, mixing it all wi' a bit o' Scriptur' like; dost see?"

Enoch: "Well, I wor going to tell thae, if thou'll only be still. Wesleyan folk in our village 'av' begun some what they call revival services, and they hae a fresh speaker every neet, an' I've heard that Jem's going to speak to-morrow neet; an' I've been thinking if some on us cud go an' hear him we should get to know all about it; an' then if he tow'd t' folk about us we'd mak' it hot for him."

Johnnie: "Capital idea! There's thae, and Joe, and Bill; yo' goa and listen, and let's know in t' morning what he does say."

This conversation, I confess, compelled me intently to play the part of an eavesdropper. The temptation was too great to be resisted; I caught every word. What I heard did not increase my personal comfort—rather the opposite. All that day and the next I was thinking about the service,

and the critics whom I expected to meet there. Often did I pray the prayer of the helpless—"Lord, help me!"

Sincerely did I desire that if they came to the service some power divine might change their critical spirit into one of penitence. I knew that if God did not take hold of them, what I said would be held up to ridicule for days to come. So while swinging my pick I pleaded for power.

At length on the Wednesday afternoon the welcome "Loose all" sounded through the mine, bidding us cease work for the day. Dressing speedily, I hurried to the pit shaft, and ascending, soon arrived at home. I resided in the town of L., M. being about four miles away. I changed hastily, and then set off on the road to my appointment. By walking sharply I arrived at the chapel in M. a few minutes before service time, and entering the pulpit, silently but earnestly besought God's blessing on the service. I then took stock of my congregation. A large number of people were present, but my critics had not as yet arrived. Perhaps they would not come. Sweet thought! Alas! just as I was giving out the hymn, the door opened, and in walked the three men who had been deputed to attend.

The first who came in was Bill. He, not understanding much about the nature of a revival service, and perhaps wishing to show his courage to the other two, walked right up the centre aisle to the front seat nearest the pulpit. Then, seating himself without any show of reverence, he threw himself back, and with a rude stare fixed his eyes upon me. His two companions glided into a seat near the door.

The service proceeded, and I confess my nerves were a little unsteady. But faith rose, and the power came. My subject was the destruction of the Cities of the Plain. With a few graphic touches I described the natural and moral features of the scene. I portrayed the sin of Sodom

as of the deepest dye. Then I pictured the escape of Lot from the burning city, and finally turned the whole application full upon my audience. No higher criticism weakened my application. The burning truths I breathed were the deep convictions of my heart. God helped me to speak that night. The people both trembled and wept. I was sure that souls would be saved. So absorbed was I in my theme that I lost all thought of my critics. It was only the final "Amen" which again brought them to my thought.

Commencing the prayer-meeting with a hymn, I looked to see if my critics were still there. Yes, all three were present. In the front seat sat Bill, with a face as white as a ghost's. His bold, impudent look was gone. A look of sad despair was in its place. Poor fellow! all his bones were broken. He came to mock; he remained to pray. Near the door, with bowed heads, were Enoch and Joe. Asking the people to kneel, I made my way to where they sat; but, as I drew near, Enoch seized his hat and bolted. Poor Joe remained, and rising up, roaring at the top of his voice, he made his way to the front to seek salvation. Glory fell upon the people. Every soul who stayed behind found Jesus. Late at night we closed, and then, tired with the exertion, I made my way home.

The next morning I went to work with mingled feelings, wondering what would be my reception. I quietly slipped to my work. Things seemed pretty peaceful. A couple of hours after commencing, "Johnnie"—the man who had deputed the other three to attend—came up from the far end of the "stall" to the gate-end plate (a large square piece of iron placed in the centre of the stall on which the loaded or empty waggons are turned). Kneeling on the plate, with his safety-lamp in one hand and his pick in the other, he shouted:—

"Ho! ho! Enoch, hallo!"

"What's up, Johnnie?" returned Enoch. "What dost ta want?"

"Come here," again shouted Johnnie. "I want to see thee."

Enoch, hastily dropping his pick, made his way to his comrade. "Now," thought I, "Johnnie is going to inquire about the sermon," so in spite of the proverb that "listeners seldom hear good of themselves," I strained my ears and listened. Darkening my lamp, I drew as near to the two miners as possible, and heard the following colloquy:—

Enoch: "Well, Johnnie, what's ta want wi' mae?"

Johnnie: "Why, I wanted to know whether thae went to the chapel last neet, and heard Jem."

Enoch: "Ah, lad, I did."

Johnnie: "Well, did he say owt about us?"

Enoch: "Well, Johnnie, I'll tell thae. Mae and Joe and Bill went, as we said we should, to t' chapel, and when we got inside Bill went reet up to t' front, but I wor none going thear. I didna mean 'em to cap mae. Mae and Joe slipped in a seat near t' door. An' after they'd sung and prayed, Jem took his text, I think he cawed it, an' mi hi' ni' if he didna prach! For sure, Johnnie, I thowt t' fire wor coming down ivery minute to swaller us all up. Ah, my lad, it wor awful. He made Joe shake like a chain lamp in t' air shaft. I sall niver forgit it, I tell thee. I got out as soon as I could for fear t' devil should ha' me."

Johnnie's mouth and ears were a perfect study as Enoch told his tale of horror.

Johnnie: "My guy, Enoch! I'm glad I wor na there. But what I wanted to know wor, did ta notice if hae sed awt about us?"

Enoch: "Howd thi noise a bit; I wor first going to tell thee. He hadna bin praching long afore he begun to tell folk about mae. I felt as if I could ha' gone through t' floor. I wondered if thou had been saying owt to him."

Johnnie shook his head.

"Well, that isna all," continued Enoch. "He actually tow'd M. folks as I'd gin three pun fifteen shillings for a Bible, and put it up t' stairs and niver opened it sin' I'd had it."

Johnnie: "Well, I niver! An' wor it true?"

Enoch: "It wor true, and that's what's puzzled me; an' what licked all wor, he said anybody could write 'damnation' in t' dust on t' covers. An' when I went whoam I picked it up to see, and for sure, lad, anybody as cud 'a' written cud 'a' done it."

Johnnie: "Well, that's queerest bit o' stuff I iver heard. How dost ta think he got to know?"

Enoch: "Well, I tow'd our missis I belaved she'd let him look at it when I were out some day. But she said hae'd niver called. But I'm going to ax him mysen, and then I shall know."

At this they separated, and I quickly hurried to my work.

During the day Enoch and I met, and he commenced to denounce me right earnestly for exposing him to a public audience.

I reasoned with him in the Spirit of Jesus, and tried to show him that the word was God's call personally to himself. I urged him to accept it as such, repent of his sins, believe, and live. We laboured together for some time afterwards, but I could never fully convince him that my message delivered that night in the chapel of M. was delivered under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and to this day I never go to the old spot and pass the chapel of M. without thinking of my critics and the way in which they were beaten.

*"He gave them Bread from Heaven
to eat."*

IN a dark street, within a home of poverty, on a wretched bed, a man lay sick unto death. His eyes were sunken, and the pallid hue—sure sign of a speedy dissolution—was upon his countenance. The end could not be far off; an end which he had long despised, and which even now he had set himself to meet with sullen despair. Possessed of a heart full of real human sympathy for the sufferings of his fellow-men, he had played a most prominent part in struggles after social amelioration. He had watched the strife of men, had seen the weak crushed, the maimed fall and more, he had observed the blasphemous apathy to human woe of those who said their religion was love of God and man, until he became the companion of those who say, "There is no God."

But now the end of all had come. The mind was thrown back upon itself. The past was reviewed; the future was weighed. What was that future—a dream or a reality? His lifelong struggles for the lives of men had left him there, in that cheerless and breadless home, without a friend to speak a word of true healing sympathy to him in his need and pain. Where were the men who had cheered at his meetings, and for whom he had suffered the loss of all things? Ah, where?

But look more closely into the home where he lies. The

furniture is broken ; the grate is fireless. Two children seated in a corner are huddled together. Beside the bed is a broken chair, on which are a crust and an empty earthenware vessel. The wife is busy stuffing some rags and various articles of clothing beneath the head of her sick husband.

"Will that do?" said the woman as she gave the finishing touch. The man faintly answered, "Yes."

A few minutes' pause, and then, "Jane!" said the sick one.

"I am here," said Jane ; "what do you want?"

"Could you make me a little gruel?"

Tears came to the woman's eyes ; it was the first ungranted request.

"I can't, for there is no oatmeal, and I have no money."

"Oh, God," said the man, "what shall we do?"

Just then a knock came to the door ; Jane answered it. It was Mr. Hilton, a professing Christian who attended the chapel about a hundred yards down the street.

He had called to see the sick man. Mr. Hilton was a firm believer in the doctrine of sovereign grace. It was comforting to know that he was one of the elect. Talk to Mr. Hilton of the poor in the back street, and he would answer you with such phrases as "A bad set," "Hypocrites," "All their own fault," "A sin to help such people," etc., etc. He visited the poor ; yes, but not so much to save *their* souls as his own. His manner was cold and distant. He was received with respect and dismissed with pleasure.

"Can I see your husband?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Jane timidly ; "come in."

Mr. Hilton stepped inside, and with an obliviousness to the misery around which would have been impossible in another, he walked across to the bed and said :—

"My friend, I have called to see you about your soul."

The dying man heard the words and murmured, "Friend! soul! I have no friend; I have no soul."

"Yes," said Mr. Hilton in a cold, professional way. "You have a soul, and unless you repent and are converted you will go to hell."

"Go away! go away!" said the man savagely, his eyes gleaming with a strange, unearthly fire.

"Shall I pray before I go?" said Mr. Hilton.

"Pray! no. If you pray, I will curse you. You tell me there is a hell. Is there a hell worse than this? Look at this woman, and these children, and this home. No bread! no fire! starving! dying!! A hell of pain here," smiting his breast. "Oh! oh! Don't you tell me there is a worse hell than this anywhere! Is that all you can say? Then go away, or I will kill you."

These words were uttered with all the strength the man could summon, and with looks and gestures terrible to behold.

Mr. Hilton made for the door, thankful enough to make his exit. In his estimation the man was hopelessly given over to the evil one.

A few hours only had elapsed since Mr. Hilton left the door when another man stood before it—Harry Thompson, a man known by everybody in that dark and densely populated neighbourhood. A wild rake he was once, but a simple act of kindness led his wandering feet into the better way. He worked in the factory at the end of the street, and though his wages were not high, the poor and needy often blessed him for the helping hand extended to them in the time of need. Men who knew him loved him. The gentle and simple were always profited by his conversation, and his sunny presence was like the breath of summer.

"I hear that your husband is very ill, Mrs. Smith; can I see him?" said Harry Thompson.

The next minute he was in the middle of the apartment.

One glance around was sufficient to tell him all. His sympathetic heart read the condition of things at once. He said not a word about religion, or Eternity, or Jesus Christ, but hastily leaving the house, he soon returned with coals, and bread and butter, and tea, and other necessities for meeting the sick man's needs. Down on his knees he went, made the fire, superintended the boiling of the kettle, stood by while Mrs. Smith made the gruel and the tea, and then with his own hands administered it to the suffering patient. With strange look and mingled feelings did Tom Smith watch the whole proceedings. And when the man whose kind solicitations he had so often refused stood at his bedside with the simple meal, and in the kindest manner urged him to eat, his heart gave way. Tears blinded him. The care of this good man for the temporal need of himself and wife and children opened the way for the gospel of Jesus to his innermost being.

"Tom, shall I pray with you?" said Harry.

"Pray," said the dying man; "yes, pray. You have brought bread for my wife and children. Yes, pray, and, Harry," said he, sobbing, "will you ask your God to make me like you? I have been very wicked. I have denied God's name, I have hated Him, but I think I have been mistaken. Your kindness makes me think what a kind God He must be. Do you think He will have me now?"

Harry's prayer was effectual. When he rose from his knees the hands were clasped, the lips moved in prayer, and on that worn, wasted face were beams of that blessed light which never

"Shone on land or sea,"

and in that weary, desolate heart was the peace of God which passeth understanding.

Salvation in a Tap-room.

THE first series of mission services I ever conducted were in the village of —, a small rural hamlet containing about three hundred inhabitants, the majority of whom were in a sad condition of moral imbecility; ignorance of God and their own spiritual needs was remarkably manifest. They followed the plough, fed the cattle, ate plenty of cheese and bacon, and, given plenty of beer and a place to sleep in, they seemed perfectly satisfied. It might truly be said that the whole place lay in the arms of the wicked one.

Poets and philosophers have almost exhausted language in attempting to portray the virtues of village life, but rural humanity falls far short of the poetical and philosophical ideal. The "young man from the country" is not such a simpleton in evil as some would think. Nature is a fine teacher, but when the foul heart looks through the blinded eye, the finger-prints of God are not detected. To those from whose eyes the scales of sin have dropped the impress of God Almighty is seen upon everything, every natural object, the sun, the seas, the mountains, the forest arches, the green sward, the loveliest flower, the human frame. To the opened ear there are whispers from the unseen stealing from every nook and glade and mountain summit. Music celestial breathes through the rustling leaves and waving corn. To the child of Jesus Nature is one grand parable, articulating in an intelligible form,

divine mysteries ; but to a soulless being Nature is a blank, an instrument out of tune, a huge, shapeless mass, "without form, and void."

The spiritual status of many villages is very low. The religion of many consists in knowing the Ten Commandments and repeating the Lord's Prayer. They are as wise in the knowledge of God as the old lady was in Methodist doctrine who, when asked what her religion was, said "it was a penny a week and a shilling a quarter." Every sin forbidden by the Decalogue is practised in the country as well as in the town. How far the Churches of Christ are to blame for this state of things is a matter for serious inquiry. No doubt a stronger piety exhibited in the lives of members connected with village churches, combined with more earnest zeal for the conversion of souls, would soon improve the condition of things. The spiritual condition of many country churches is lamentable indeed. In the towns there is a continual friction of evangelistic effort and faithful service, which reacts with most beneficial influence on the churches around, saving the most conservative and cold from spiritual ruin and moral decay. In the country this is not so. The same dull routine of service goes on from year to year. Twenty or thirty years ago this was more generally true than it is to-day. The grand revival of evangelistic effort in our large centres of population, together with the welcome innovations of the Salvation Army, and the forward movement in Wesleyan circles, have stirred the life and thought of every church throughout the land ; but, even yet, the moral dearth in many country districts is sad to contemplate.

The village I have mentioned was no exception to the rule. Year after year labour had been expended upon it, with very little manifest results. The spiritual sluggishness of the inhabitants seemed too deep for the gospel to remove. Thousands of prayers had been offered, yet no

sign from heaven appeared. Egyptian darkness, a darkness that could be felt, had settled upon many minds.

There were at the time of which I write three places where religious worship was conducted: the Established Church, the Wesleyan chapel, and the Primitive Methodist chapel. The two former were situated at one end of the village, the end where the most respectable part of the inhabitants resided; the Primitive Methodist chapel being, as usual, among the poor and spiritually destitute at the other end.

A peculiarity connected with our chapel in this village was the fact that the property was not connexional: the circuit authorities rented it from a lady whose business and the business of the Church were not particularly favourable to each other. She was in the liquor trade. Her place of business was in the same street as the chapel. Her leanings, however, were very favourable to the Methodists, and particularly to the Primitive Methodists, whom she believed to be the true preservers of apostolic Christianity. In this she was right; I believe so too. Her favourable impressions led her to rent us a place for services. Though she knew her business was contrary to God and conscience, she believed that her kindness to the Methodists would propitiate God on her behalf. For years, therefore, under these conditions we had struggled on. We just managed to exist, and sometimes barely did that. At the time of which I write the membership had dwindled down to four—three men and one woman.

This was the condition of affairs when I, not long converted, took my place for the first time in the quarterly meeting. During the meeting the question of continuing the place on the plan was discussed. Some were for striking it off; others were for giving it one more trial. To erase its name from the plan was, so far as we were concerned, to hand both the place and the people entirely over to the enemy

This seemed too serious to be entertained. It was decided by the meeting to continue it for a short time longer, and then if there was no improvement, to have done with it altogether. This appeared to me, in the zeal of my first love, to be simply awful. When the new plans came out I eagerly examined mine, and to my joy found that I was appointed to preach there on or about the first Sunday.

When the day arrived, I started off to fulfil my pulpit duties. After the evening service I called the four members together and informed them of the quarterly meeting's decision. The announcement saddened them. Their sorrow made them silent.

"Well," I said, "I have a proposal to make to you, and that proposal is this: if you will covenant to have special meetings for prayer for a whole week, and have a week's special meetings the week following, I will come and preach for you myself after my day's labour at the mine is done, for I believe that a revival of God's work is the only thing which can save you, both as a Church and a people."

They unanimously accepted my offer, and agreed to spend one hour each day in supplication to God for blessing on the services which were to follow.

The week of prayer over, the evening came when I had to commence my first week of mission services. The night was dark and wet. Nature was in one of her most uncomfortable moods. Heavy clouds were banked up here and there in a very dull sky, while the continued rains had made the roads as rough and dirty as they could well-nigh be. The way to the village was exceedingly difficult to find, so to make doubly sure I enlisted the company and guidance of a good earnest brother, who was ready for anything in the service of Christ. He was also very eccentric, and often in his speaking and praying would excite my risibilities to an irreverent degree. When praying, for instance, he always finished with one phrase — a phrase which

generally sent me into a fit of laughter—namely, “And bring us all around Thy white-washed throne in heaven.” Thus he would bring us from sublime fellowship to summer cleaning, and do it by such transition of speech that the effect was very comical. Notwithstanding this failing, he was a good man, and I was very glad of his company. On the evening named we started off, resolved to make all haste to our destination. When passing the town clock we found that the labour of the day had left us so late that we should not be able to perform the journey at anything like a comfortable rate. The distance to the village was four miles. The service commenced at seven; the old church clock chimed half-past six as we went by, leaving us thirty minutes to cover four miles. Making the best of it, we commenced to run.

I may say that there were two ways by which the village could be reached. One was the orthodox turnpike road; this was both the cleaner and the safer, but it was the farther way round. The other was a foot road most difficult to travel in wet weather, and in the dark exceedingly difficult to find, but its chief advantage lay in the fact that it was by far the shorter. Clearing the town, we entered the footpath leading across the fields. The grass was very wet owing to the rain, which had been falling heavily. Some parts of the pathway were very slippery, due to the turf in many places being worn away. The soil generally was of a red, clayey nature, and in damp or wet weather was very treacherous to walk upon. We managed to keep our feet well until half the journey had been traversed, when, much to our discomfort, an unlooked-for incident transpired. About a mile and a half from the village the path suddenly descended into a deep gully. For about one hundred and fifty yards there was a series of descents, each more steep than the one preceding. At the bottom of the last descent was a deep ditch, along

which ran a stream of muddy water which was drained from the adjoining lands. On the opposite side of the ditch was a very high mud bank. Several rude stone steps had been embedded in the bank by rustics, to aid the pedestrian in his ascent to the higher level of the ploughed land beyond. A narrow plank fixed firmly in the soil served as a kind of insecure bridge by which to cross the stream. On came my friend and I, forgetful of everything save the fact that we were very much behind time. Running at the top of our speed, in Indian file, sweating at every pore, scarcely able to keep our feet, slipping first this way, then that, like novice skaters on the ice making W's and C's with plenty of flourishes no doubt, we whirled over the ridge at the bottom of which was the ditch. The pace at which we were going made it impossible for us to stop. The descent was too steep and slippery for us to attempt any slackening process. Every step we took increased our speed, until self-preservation became the supreme desire. My only concern, my only aim, just then was to hit the plank bridge at the bottom of the gully, and so save myself from a possible broken leg and a certain baptism of mud.

As to my friend who was behind, I lost all thought of him in the absorbing fact of my own danger. At last the end came. Missing the plank, I dashed into the ditch and struck a broadside, or a portside, against the barricade of soft mud on the other side. Talk about the charge of the Light Brigade! mine was the charge of the Heavy Brigade. If every Russian gunner had received a shock such as I gave that bank, he would have wanted his mother to nurse him for a month or two. As soon as I could recover breath I scrambled from my unenviable position, bringing with me, from crown to sole, as a small memento of the tragic event, a sorry mixture of mud and water. But my friend, where was he? He had not yet arrived, and I was a little anxious as to his fate.

Retracing my steps a little up the hill, I heard a faint voice shouting, "Glory! Hallelujah!" Pressing on up the hill-side as well as I could, I soon found him, on his back in a soft mud hole, with his legs straight up as a couple of line props, shouting, "Praise the Lord!" In running behind me he happened to place his heels on the edge of one of the clayey declivities already mentioned, when suddenly he felt his feet where his head should be, and himself prostrate in the mud. When I reached his side he was, in Sammy Hick fashion, laughing and praising aloud.

"My brother," I said, "why in the world are you lying there praising the Lord in a condition like that?"

"Oh," he answered, with another "Hallelujah!" "I'm blessing God because my back isn't broken."

Assisting him to rise, I laughed outright at his uncivilised appearance, and he returned the compliment when he took stock of my very unparsonic attire. Thankful to God that our adventure was no worse, we started off again, but this time at a more moderate pace.

Arriving at our destination, we were not surprised to find that the time for commencing service was past. The people were waiting for us, and without any break I immediately commenced the meeting. At the close we held a prayer-meeting, but no one volunteered for Christ.

When the service was over, the female member of the Society—for there was only one—came to me in a rather excited way and said: "Mr. Flanagan, the landlady of the public-house close by is in a terrible rage because we are holding these services. She says that 'people hear enough about religion on the Sunday without having it pushed down their throats all the week.' And she also declares that 'if you come here to-morrow night she will upset you.'"

"Well," I said, "don't be alarmed. It would be a wonder indeed if the devil lost his hold upon the people without a struggle, after retaining it so long. Let us make

it a matter of prayer. God will see us safely through. *We* cannot retreat. We *must* go forward. Let us do so, and leave the rest to God."

The public-house mentioned was about one hundred yards from the chapel, and was owned by the woman from whom we rented the place where we held our services. Situate in the poorest and worst part of the village, it was the rendezvous for all those who moved in the lower levels of society. There human as well as divine laws were broken with impunity. Drinking at almost all hours was the rule. The landlord had died some time before, leaving the business to be carried on by his widow. Standing in height about six feet, and possessed of more strength than many a man, she was well able to deal with the rough company which usually assembled in her house. Her son, a fine, powerfully built fellow, about thirty years of age, and considerably over six feet in height, also assisted her in the business.

The evening after the one already described I started off alone to conduct my second service. Duty compelled my friend, who accompanied me the first evening, to stay at home. Darkness came on before I had proceeded far, but having taken time by the forelock, I was able to pick my steps more carefully. When within about half a mile of the village I heard loud shouts, interspersed with coarse laughter, while high up in the air I saw reflected on the dark sky the lurid light of what appeared to be a huge bonfire. Wondering what it meant, I drew near and listened. Taking a sharp turn to the left, I took a short cut across some fields, and passing through a gap in the hedge, I found myself in the main street of the village, and about two hundred yards from the revellers. Fortunately I met the good sister who, the previous evening, acquainted me with the landlady's intention to upset us.

"What is all this noise about?" I asked.

"Oh," she answered, "this is the old landlady's trick to put an end to the meetings. She has given yon roughs a load of coal and timber to have a fire, and she has made them a present of a big barrel of beer on which to get drunk, and ill-use you and upset the services, and see yonder, they are on the green, drinking and dancing like mad."

"Leave me," I said; "I will go and see what can be done by God's help."

Leaving the woman in the road, I walked slowly along towards the village green, where the carnival was being held. A sudden bend of the road brought me in full view of the scene. And a peculiar one it was. In the centre of the green was a huge bonfire. Large pieces of timber, drawn from the wood close by, were thrown on the blazing pile. The tongues of flame shot high up in the air, making the darkness of the starless sky appear darker still, while everything around was lighted up with a peculiar brilliancy. It reminded me of the fabled scene on the Catskill Mountains, where Rip Van Winkle plays skittles with the demon pirates. On one side of the green, fixed on two pairs of cross-leg supports, was a huge cask of beer, with tap affixed and jug underneath. Around the fire, on different parts of the green, were men and women, whose language and appearance bespoke the roughness of their character. Singing, swearing, dancing, and drinking were the order of the night. This, however, was by the way. Their chief diversion that night was to be got out of the parson, even your humble servant; all the fun of the fair was to gather around him. Contemplating the scene, I thought that mine was by no means an enviable piece of business to undertake. But the words of the Lord came to my mind, "Fear not; I am with thee: be not dismayed; I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

With a brief prayer to God for His help and guidance, I stepped out of the shadow where I had been standing, and advanced in a careless manner to the centre of the green.

For the first few minutes my presence attracted no attention. Walking quietly up to the fire, and addressing myself to two or three men who stood near, I said :—

“It’s very cold to-night, chaps ; would you mind letting a fellow have a bit of a warm ?”

The men at once respectfully moved away, leaving for me a fairly large space round the fire to myself. For a few minutes I stood enjoying the warmth, and at the same time carefully observing what was passing around. The men to whom I had spoken, I noticed, were eyeing me over very curiously. At last one said, loud enough for me to hear :—

“Who is he ?”

“Why, dunno ye know ? It’s t’ preacher,” said another.

“Well, I niver ; he’s a cure, and no mistake.”

These words were spoken loud enough for me to hear. Finding that my identity was discovered, I thought the time for action had arrived. Turning to the crowd, I addressed them in a loud, commanding tone, thus :—

“My friends, I should be extremely obliged if you would allow me, on your behalf, to change the programme a little. I believe I shall have your unanimous consent to this ; therefore, having ceased your games”—for by this time all eyes were fixed upon me—“what do you say to a little singing ? I will give out the verses, start the tune, and you must help me with the chorus.”

Suiting the action to the word, I repeated the first verse of Cowper’s grand old hymn—

“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Starting it in an old familiar tune, with which I thought

they would all be conversant, I commenced to sing, but I had to sing alone. Some listened, others laughed, a few scoffed, while several, seemingly ashamed of their conduct, crept away. After singing two verses, I said, "Now, friends, I am going to kneel down and pray to God for you." Taking off my hat, I knelt in the centre of the green and earnestly besought the Holy Ghost to arrest them in their ruinous course and bring them to Christ. It was a remarkable scene. The starless sky o'erhead; nature still and wrapped in the mantle of night; the tall flames of the bonfire casting an unearthly glare, sending their gleams far out into the darkness around! The revellers stood still, as though some magician's wand had turned them into stone. The lurid light from the blazing piles made them appear like spectres in some fairy brocken. The only sounds were the crackling of the burning logs and the voice of pleading in prayer. When I ceased praying, a solemn silence rested upon every soul. The laughing had ceased; the scoffers were silenced. A spirit of seriousness appeared to have seized every mind. One man who stood near me while I knelt manifested deep feeling, while all present were completely subdued.

Rising to my feet, I said, "Now, men, I am the preacher who is conducting services in the chapel close by, and I give all an invitation to come along and hear me preach the word of God. Leave your dancing and beer for an hour and come to the house of prayer. Then if you wish, come out and continue your dancing and drinking as long as you like. My purpose in coming to your village night after night, when my own hard day's work is ended, is not for personal profit, but to do you good. Come then with us to-night, and you may hear something that will prove an eternal blessing to your soul." I then struck up with—

"Turn to the Lord and seek salvation,
Sound the praise of His dear name;
Glory, honour, and salvation,
Christ the Lord is come to reign."

I walked along the road towards the chapel as I sang, and part of the crowd followed me. Beginning the service indoors, I was pleased to see that a few of the roughest of our would-be persecutors had accepted my invitation to be present. That night the word of God was with power. Several of those who came to scoff remained to pray. There was "a shout of a king in the camp"; "the right hand of the Lord was exalted; the right hand of the Lord did valiantly."

Among the number smitten that night with conviction was a tall, powerful-looking man, who appeared to be the ringleader of the others. During the prayer-meeting I found him on a low form in one corner of the chapel trembling in every limb. His conscience must have been ill at ease. His countenance but too clearly revealed the anguish of his spirit. But no inducement would lead him to surrender. He willed to remain in suffering.

The meeting being ended, I prepared to go home. I was inwardly glad at the result of the night's work. The attempt of the landlady and her hired crew to snuff out the meetings had signally failed. Neither beer nor bonfire had succeeded. Not only so, but her beer bait had gained us a congregation. The spirit of opposition was completely allayed. The devil once again had overshot the mark. Bidding the people "good-night," I passed out into the cold, dark street, intending to make for home as quickly as possible. The night was very dark, so dark that I could scarcely see my way. Neither moon nor stars were visible. Coming from the lighted chapel, the darkness seemed darker still. Groping my way to the end of the street, I came to the gap in the hedge already mentioned, intending to take the short cut home. Stooping down, I commenced to creep cautiously through for fear of falling into the ditch on the other side. Having had a ditch experience the night before, I did not desire another. While these things were

passing through my mind I felt a heavy hand grip my shoulder. Turning round, I saw standing over me the man to whom I referred as ringleader of the opposition. Holding me fast by the shoulder, he said :

"I say, preacher, ha' yo' hed ony supper?"

"No, my friend," I answered, "I don't need any, thank you. I can easily manage until I arrive home."

"Nay," he retorted, "but I shanna let tha goo from here to-neet till tha's hed summat to eat; tha mun come wi' mae to our house."

Wanting to get home, I did not relish this interference; besides, it might be a trick to betray me, though on the surface the act appeared kind and generous. I begged to be excused, but I could not prevail. Keeping a firm hold on me with his big hand—for it seemed almost as large as a small leg of mutton—he distinctly told me that he should accept no denial, that go with him I must. Talk about "boycotting," here was Irish coercion in England with a vengeance.

Walking along by his side in silence, I ruminated on my peculiar position. Here I was, in the grasp of a man whose respect for law, judging from the events of the evening, was not of the highest kind. The streets were by this time deserted, the place was lonely, and I was being taken—where?

Ah! there was the rub. I knew not where my muscular guide was leading me. I knew how completely the devil's little plot had been foiled, and now what if this was a scheme to equalise matters with me! I had read of robbers' caves, deeds of treachery, secret assassinations, and such-like, and what if any of these things were to happen to me! Screwing up my courage, I resolved to ask my strange custodian whither he was taking me.

"Where do you live?" I asked.

"At the public," he answered bluntly.

"Where?" I said, in breathless astonishment.

"At the public-house," he said in a louder tone.

"Why, are you——?"

"I'm th' landlady's son," said he, judging what my question was going to be.

"Well," thought I, "this is a queer predicament to be in, certainly. What the end will be I know not." I could not look for much mercy from the woman who had sworn such bitter things against us. Yet here was I being led away by her son for supper to the very house from which her curses had gone forth.

I felt that I should be very thankful to God if I reached home that night without my skull being cracked. At last we reached the alehouse door, and my guide, opening it, commanded me to "go in." I did so, and found myself in a long, dark passage, into which opened several doors, leading, as I supposed, into the several drinking-rooms. On the right-hand side of the passage from where I stood was a door which led into the largest room, called the tap-room. Casting a glance through the open door, I saw that a company of not over-enviable characters were assembled. The tobacco smoke and the beer were doing their work. Tongues were loosed, and a constant flow of babble, mingled with the usual oaths and curses, poured from the lips of those present. Into this room my guide ushered me. Asking me to be seated, he inquired what I would like for supper.

"Oh, anything you like, my friend, that is readiest."

"What will you have to drink?" he next inquired.

"I will take a glass of water, please," was the answer.

"All right, sir," returned he, "make yourself at home; I will bring it in a few minutes." He then left me to survey my surroundings.

The room I was in was one of those large, low, badly lighted rooms so common even to-day in the old-fashioned country inns. The light coming from the oil lamps fixed

here and there shed a sickly glare all around. Their pale light, together with the weird appearance and half-intoxicated condition of the men, formed a strange contrast to the service of praise and prayer which that evening we had held in the chapel close by. The fire in the large, ancient grate had almost burnt itself out. The furniture was very primitive in style. A rude kind of bench belted the apartment. The centre of the room was filled up with several large, heavily constructed tables, such as are often seen in country inns. These, with a few rush-bottomed chairs belonging to a past age, completed the furniture of the room.

The company, as I have already hinted, was not of the most acceptable kind. Judging from the quantity and quality of their talk, some of them were fast yielding to the potent spell of King Alcohol. Their conversation was flavoured very much with fire and brimstone, while now and again a burst of coarse laughter at some vulgar witticism would ring through the place.

While I was musing on these things my host brought me my supper, and after urging me to get a "good 'un," left me to myself. To the left of where I sat two men were drinking at a table by themselves. I noticed that one of these men several times eyed me over with a curious stare. At last, speaking across the table to his companion, in a low voice, he said, "I say, Jack, that fellow can sing."

The man thus spoken to, and who was in a half-drunken condition, said, "Can he?" Then turning to me, he said, or rather shouted, "I say, guv'ner, thou mun sing us a song afore thou goes."

"All right," I said; "I don't mind singing a song when I have finished my supper."

How the man who had called Jack's attention to my vocal powers knew that I could sing was a mystery, unless

he had heard me sing for Jesus in the public street some time or other. However, having finished my repast, I stood up in the centre of the room, with my back to the fireplace (public-house style), cleared my voice, and awaited their attention.

"Order!" shouted the man who said he knew I could sing.

"Order, chaps!" chimed in Jack; "give order for a song."

The calls for order became general, and being accompanied by the rapping of knuckles on the tables, soon obtained silence.

Before commencing to sing, I said, "Now, gentlemen, I shall be glad if you will help me in the chorus."

"Ah, lad," was the answer, "we will if we can."

With perfect silence they sat around, expecting, I have no doubt, a stave of "Larragan's Ball," or "Tommy, make room for your uncle," or some other music-hall trash, but I commenced to sing,—

"The great Physician now is near,
The sympathising Jesus;
He speaks the drooping heart to cheer,
Oh, hear the voice of Jesus."

The scene was unique, if not startling. The change wrought on some of their faces was a perfect study. The song was a different kind from what they expected. Their thoughts and surroundings moved in another direction. It was bearding the lion in his den. It was a case of fighting the devil on his own territory; and in trying the experiment I scarce knew how it would end. Not a word was spoken while I sang. A storm of feeling gathered on the faces of several who were present. The chorus reached, I urged all to sing. It was a sorry attempt. Neither words nor tune were known, but before we had reached the last

verse they had mastered both, and with all the lung power they possessed they sang out,—

“Sweetest name on mortal tongue,
Sweetest note in seraph song,
Sweetest carol ever sung,
Jesus, blessed Jesus.”

Tears glistened in several eyes. The hymn, in such a place, reminded them of purer scenes and other days. Memories of Sunday-school, and family altar, and death-bed partings, came back with awful vividness in that ale-house room. The unction of the Holy One rested upon us. The song being finished, I solemnly said: “Let us pray.” Not a man kept his seat. There were men present who looked as though they had never bent the knee in prayer since they left their mother’s knee. But in that public-house tap-room that night they bowed before the God of heaven.

Kneeling in their midst, on that stone floor, I pleaded that the Spirit of God would lead them all to true repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having finished my prayer, I opened my eyes, and there kneeling in the doorway of the room was the landlady of the house, whose opposition to our work had caused so much anxiety. Rising from her knees, she expressed sorrow for what she had done, and hoped God would forgive and save her. As I turned from the landlady, a man of the company came and wrung my hand; tears coursed down his cheeks as he said:—

“God bless you, sir, for what you have done here to-night. Three weeks ago to-day my wife lay dying. Before she breathed her last she made me promise to be a good father to the three children she was leaving behind, and to bring them up in the right way. But as soon as she was laid in the grave I took to the drink to drown my sorrow.

Every night since the funeral I have left the children in the house alone, but, God helping me, from this night I will go home to the bairns and be a Christian man."

Giving them all a word of exhortation, I bade them "good-night," and came away.

I have reason to know that the scene in that tap-room is thought of with deep gratitude to this day by some who were there. Some who were present bear its impress on their lives. The vows registered that night on the stone floor of that unhallowed spot have never been forgotten. The mission services from that time increased in power and blessing. Prejudice was broken down, and enmity destroyed. God made our enemies to be at peace with *us*, and the wrath of man to praise *Him*.

Blessed indeed is it to know that there is no scene or circumstance but may be turned to good account. Souls may be influenced and saved in the most unlikely ways and places. A song may touch the heart when the sermon fails. A word of kindness may lift a life to God. A tear shed over a wayward brother may melt his stubborn nature. The very acme of spiritual philosophy is that wisdom which turns every opportunity into golden service. To transmute the basest surroundings into the highest good, this is wisdom indeed.

"Bliss hath he, and only he,
Who in God becometh free ;

* * * *

Radiant more his face must be
Who transfigureth land and sea."

Be it ours to transfigure the commonest events into mountains of mercy and blessing. True service never waits for opportunities : it runs to meet them ; when none can be found, it creates them. The world is a workshop where characters are made, a battle-ground where spurs

are won. Holy men make holy places. "Wist ye not I must be about My Father's business," will suit Bethlehem's inn as well as Jerusalem's Temple. Wherever duty calls, go. "Ours not to reason why, ours but to do or die." Blessed is the man or woman who, in public-house or palace, can stoop to save.

"Scatter the seed on the passing breeze,
And the winds may waft it along
To some who may pass through the gates at last,
And sing in the blood-washed throng."

The Doll Missionary.

A TALE OF THE CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL.

WELL, really! wonders surely will never cease! A doll missionary? How strange! I fancy some very learned lady or gentleman looking at the title of this story, and with a condescending smile and a very significant shrug turning the printed page over to find something more serious and profound. But, my dear young friends, this story is written for you, and not for those people who are so good that they never smile, and so wise that they never condescend to notice the ministry of little things.

But, after all, I do not think there is anything strange in my telling you about a missionary doll. Have we not heard of a book called *The Language of Flowers*? And the Bible tells us of speaking sand and stars; nay, it declares that the whole earth is full of God's glory. Jesus heard the voice of truth in lilies, birds, seeds; and even a woman making bread was full of meaning to Him. The Psalmist was once so fascinated that, as he gazed upon the splendour of earth and sky, he said that the language and speech of God were in all things.

Well, as I said before, this story is not written for very wise people, but for such simple folk as you and I. So we will not think while we are reading it of those awful people who never laugh, who feel it a sin to look at dolls, and who always feel most at home in churchyards reading the verses on tombstones.

Young people like to laugh. So do I. I like to have one of those big resurrection laughs that shake you up all

over. A good laugh is like a breath from the sea or a mountain climb. People who laugh and sing miss many a storm and escape many a cross. In heaven there are no tears ; that means that everybody's sorrow and pain will be swallowed up in joy. A smile is heaven's morning ; an overflowing happiness is heaven's noontide. Of course I want you to remember that very fine ladies and gentlemen never laugh loudly. To do so is bad manners. Good society never speaks loudly, except when it addresses a political meeting, attends the racecourse, or says naughty words. And on these occasions society etiquette allows it. But such plain people as we are, perhaps, have no time to master the artificial rules of good breeding, so we are obliged to put up with the teachings of common sense.

If you ask me why high people do not laugh loudly, I can scarcely tell. Perhaps in certain cases—I do not say all, far from it—they are afraid their cheeks might crack, and the paint fall off. For I am sorry to tell you that all roses on human cheeks are not real. I hope you all go in for the natural colour, as I do myself. Attend to your health of body and soul, and you will never lack beauty of the best kind. People whose make-up is not real are always on the edge of a fix, like a man who was going down the street the other week on a very windy day. He was wearing a wig, poor man. To wear a wig is a misfortune ; to paint a cheek is—well, a sin. Suddenly there came a gust of wind which blew his wig into the middle of the road. Up to that moment he and the wig, no doubt, were good friends. But after the villainous tuft had served him such a shabby trick he immediately cut the acquaintance. The crowd stared, but he walked straight on, giving one the impression that he and the wig were perfect strangers to each other. A pennyworth of glue, liquefied and carefully laid on, would have saved him from such a humiliation. Alas ! it is remarkable at what a little expense the lost

friendships and associations of life might have been retained. So my counsel to you who are young is, Rejoice. Have an eye to the gladsome side of life. Laugh and sing. The music of a child's voice when it is pure is like the far-off echo of the angels' song. There is a time to laugh, and there is a time to weep. The tears will come soon enough. Children's laughter is to me the sweetest music outside heaven.

But let me return to our friend the doll. The one I refer to was of a good stock. She was one of those who do not degrade, but honour, their ancestry. "She," I say, for dolls have sex as well as other folk. Some belong to the males, and some to the females. The one I am writing about was of the female order. I say she came of a good stock. For I can assure you that the ancestry of some dolls is not very creditable, while the aristocracy of others can be seen at a glance. You can tell by the air of refinement and the grace with which they conduct themselves that they are of noble birth. In fact, I have in my lifetime, yea, since I came to London, had the inestimable privilege of introduction to a few who were closely related to royalty. Such dolls are very scarce. The great majority belong to the lower and middle classes. The rich and the opulent do not often visit us in the slums. I said "lower classes." Alas! I am sorry to say that, as among men and women, there is a dangerous class among the doll species. These are a cause of much anxiety to those who are interested in their welfare. I am afraid their bad manners are the result of lack of education and neglect of proper training. Poor things! It may be the evil fruit of homes where they were banged about and left in some wretched corner, hungry and forlorn. And dolls, like other people, when they get into disreputable ways, go from bad to worse. Some, for instance, are down at the heels. I have seen others with a dirty pair of stockings on and a pair of old boots, like some of the

beggars in our parish who go about in rags to excite pity. I came across several the other day who had such fine hats on, but whose underclothing was quite untidy. They reminded me of some young ladies I have seen who are all show outside and nothing in. And I am sure you will agree with me that it is not very creditable for either a doll or a lady to have a fine bonnet and an empty brain. Of course intelligent people know at once that such creatures are nought but slatterns. Then how disagreeable some dolls look. I saw one some time ago who looked as though she had never loved anybody. A sharp-eyed, crabbed-mouthed, weazen-faced old crone, who appeared from what I saw of her to be ready to snarl at anything. I was wicked enough to think that if the end of her long nose touched the Thames it would turn it into vinegar. She would have made a good Lancashire witch for Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, to ride on broom-sticks round gravestones at night frightening people to death. Then we have some so ugly that they make you believe they might have descended from those horrid old women, whom Shakespeare talks about, that one night in a cavern walked round a cauldron singing :—

“Thrice the brindled cat hath mewed,
Thrice ; and once the hedge pig whined ;
Double, double time and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”

Alas ! I am sorry to tell you that we have some who descend as low as the prize ring. Of course these are not ladies, nor are they even gentlemen. They may be able to dress finely, say “La-de-da,” go to balls, but they are vulgar for all that. One day our missionary was catechising the slum children. He asked, “Who are the two greatest men in America ?” The answer given was : “Corbett and Fitzsimmons.” These are two brutish men who get their living by spoiling each other’s faces. At such an answer you may smile and think, How very foolish ! Yes,

but there are many people in England, who profess to be very superior to you and me, who look upon us as being quite simple folk because we love God and pray, while they are so refined as to find amusement in seeing rough men disfigure the human face with their fists—that face which God gave man to reflect His glory. If men do this, no wonder that dolls, who are such helpless creatures, are led astray in the same path! But, after all, I would sooner have a fighting doll than a hypocritical one. Hypocrite! What, are there hypocrites among dolls? Yes, there are. Dolls, like other people, can be anything, or do anything, as the fashion pleases. They can whistle and cry, shout and scream, take milk like babes, and even roll up their eyes like hypocritical saints who have ocular convulsions every time they pray. It is a most wretched thing to appear to be wax when you are only sawdust.

Some time ago I invited all dolls who felt inclined to meet me at our mission. I was surprised at the large number that attended. Of course our gathering was for religious purposes. Many had been under Christian influences before they came to us. They came from spheres of service where they had been brightening homes and blessing little children. They came to us out of sympathy with our work, and with a single desire to bless others. But there were many who sorely needed a reformation. Our attention was specially devoted to these. There were some that caused us a great deal of trouble on account of their rudeness. One impudent boy was so ill-behaved that he was constantly putting out his tongue at everybody while we were taking tea. I felt shocked; so did many others. I threatened once to turn him out, but it was no use; so out of pity we treated him with silent contempt. But judgment overtook him, for the string of his tongue broke, and he ceased to annoy. Another interrupted the meeting by calling out during the service, "You're

another," thus upsetting the gravity of everyone present. The cause of a large amount of concern to us was the presence of a body of Chinese citizens, together with a single Japanese soldier. We knew something of the antipathy existing between these two nationalities on account of the late war, and we were afraid of a renewal of hostilities. To flatter the Chinese (for you know the Chinese are very vain) we elevated them some distance above the Jap, hoping that such respect paid to their characteristic vanity might allay any feeling of resentment. We thought it advisable, however, to hold them in with a small hempen cord. But it was altogether useless, for while we were busy in another part of the hall we heard a loud noise, followed by what appeared to be a severe struggle on the ground. Hastening to the spot we found a scattered heap of bodies lying all around. The Chinese had broken loose, and from their superior position had fallen with their whole weight on the poor Jap, dashing him violently to the floor. We separated them as quickly as possible, and were glad to find that the Jap soldier was little the worse, while the poor Chinese were in a most pitiable plight. Arms, legs, and eyes were lying about in all directions. Such scenes were very distressing, and called forth great care. I am glad to state that such was the spirit at work in our meetings that every doll, both Pharisee and Publican, wax and sawdust, was consecrated to service among the children of men before the meeting ended. All, did I say? Well, not all. There were a few so utterly lost to all that was good that we had to throw them on the rubbish heap.

I can assure you it was a grand time when we were all gathered for service. It was a most brilliant assemblage in spite of the presence of a sprinkling of the lower classes. Some very remarkable personages were there. Near the entrance to the anteroom was the Sultan of Turkey. There was quite a hush among the dolls where he stood. I thought

that I heard one doll say to another that, if he winked his eye, there would be another massacre. Of course our Sultan was only a dummy, stuffed with brown paper, and we have often wished the real one was, only you must not say all that you feel. But nobody can hang you for thinking, as long as you say nothing. Then next to the Sultan was the Emperor of Germany (also a dummy, though, I may tell you, the *Daily Chronicle* said the other day that he was no fool). The Emperor stood with a very threatening aspect, holding out a "mailed fist" as though he would like to hit someone. This was not a very polite attitude for a gentleman in his position to assume at a religious service.

Our feelings were much wrought upon by several Irish harvestmen (God bless 'em), who, being seated near the piano, began to tremble with emotion when the pianist struck up with—

"The harp that once through Tara's halls."

When we began our first service the vast audience looked down upon us from gallery, ceiling, pilaster, and wall, from organ pipe and niche. All ranks and conditions were there. The better educated and refined brushed elbows with the shabby genteel. Rags and velvet hobnobbed together. Of course we had some ladies and gentlemen of the human kind who came to the festival, to whom these motley companies of dolls meant nothing, superior people who turned up their noses, and said with a kind of intellectual sneer, "A doll show, I suppose." But there were other people to whom these creatures of wax and wood meant a great deal. No, it was not a doll show exactly, but a lesson of love and a memento of affection to Him who, by talking of cups of water and dead sparrows, shadowed deeds of immortal beauty and blessing. Some people are so very, very wise, and some are—otherwise. God says they are wise in their own conceit. God's wisdom is sometimes foolishness with men.

But what am I doing? I really commenced this story in

order to tell you about a doll who became a missionary, but how very far I have wandered from my theme! Now let me return and tell you all about it in a few words.

A missionary doll? Yes, and "she"—there, I have not forgotten the sex, you see—was none of your waxy-faced, sawdust kind. She was genuine wood through and through. Do not think I suggest that she was wooden, but wood. Her dress was neat and clean, and though she wore clogs (perhaps the clogs were a sign of her Lancastrian descent), she was most decent and well-behaved. Her face always wore a smile. One pleasing feature is that if you once set a doll smiling she will do nought else. Our missionary doll had been sent up to London by an orphan girl, to whom she was related by ties of friendship, for the purpose of consecrating herself to the service of some poor girl of the street. The parting between her original mistress and herself was very affecting. Dolly was leaving a good home. She and her mistress had spent hours of happiness together. But at the higher call mistress and doll parted, the one abiding in her home, loving and serving the kind friends who had adopted her; the other entering upon a life of self-denial in the slums of the great city.

"Farewell," said the orphan child; "farewell, Dolly. You have been a dear friend to me; and when you reach London I hope you will befriend someone else."

If ever there was a time when poor Dolly felt like changing her smile for a tear, it was when she was kissed for the last time in her old home, and then laid carefully in the box to ride to her new destination.

I am sure you will believe me when I say that we received her as graciously as we could. For dolls, like young folk, soon get lost when they come to London unless they are well looked after. I thought Dolly looked dreadfully frightened when I took her out of the box where she had been sleeping, perhaps for sorrow. For true self-denying

service does not make us insensible to feeling. Some say it does; but they are mistaken. The more like Jesus we are, the more sensitive we become. It is sin and selfishness that harden us.

Dolly soon made herself at home, and appeared to enjoy the meetings very much. Once or twice I caught her smile, and, I thought, a look of inquiry. Yes, I knew what it meant. "Where shall I be sent?" The remainder of my story is to tell you where she went and the result.

In the district where I live we have very many poor children. A great man, named Mr. Charles Booth, who knows all about these things, says that the poorest children in all London can be found in Weston Street and the courts and alleys around. Well, Weston Street is about two hundred yards from our chapel. The poor we have always with us; dolls only come occasionally. We have thousands of poor waifs, little bits of ill-fed, cruelly treated humanity, who are tossed for a while on the rough sea of life. Some grow up to be vicious, some are brought by a ministry of love to Jesus, while many others pass away to the slumless land.

The children, poor things, are not half so well off as many of the dolls.

I have seen at Christmas-time some of our little ones gazing eagerly into the shop windows where the toys and dolls were, looking so happy and bright. I have no doubt they were wishing that they might change places with some of them; for it seems much better to be a doll of wax or wood than to be born to cruelty, hunger, and shame, as some of them are. Poor things, when we tell them about heaven they think it is a place, as a girl said at one of our meetings, where the "bloomin' gardens are." They imagine that all they will have to do when they get there will be to romp in the fields and pluck daisies. One little thing who had been diseased from her birth, old in suffer-

ing before she was young in years, whose days had been passed in an ill-furnished room full of deadly damp, found her way at last to the hospital ward. The nurse, kind Christian soul, watched her fade away. Each day a few snowdrops or violets were placed by her cot, that she might enjoy the beauty of the one and the fragrance of the other. To ; "Tabby," as they called her, the flowers seemed like visitants from the eternal land. As her end drew near the nurse said to her, "What will be the very first thing you will do when you get to heaven?" "Please, nurse," was the answer, "I shall go out and gather some flowers."

But you must not suppose that our streetboys and girls are a dull set. Oh, no ; they are full of fun and frolic. They like a joke, and they are quick to perceive the strength or weakness of those who would teach them. The first night that I had a limelight service in a dirty back street we were dependent in our preparation of the lantern on the flickering light of a shaky old gas lamp. Suddenly the light went out and left us in total darkness. A lad, all rags and tatters, seeing our position, had quietly climbed the lamp-post and turned the tap. After sweating and toiling we managed to throw a picture on the screen illustrating the "Carpenter's Shop at Nazareth." Just as I began the descriptive account of the scene, a dirty-faced lass near to me said, as she saw the wood piled in one corner of the view, "I say, Sall, them's bigger bundles o' chips than owd Darby gives us in Tabard Street." It was a funny remark, and for some minutes convulsed the bystanders with laughter. One of the boys, who lives in a lodging-house, asked me if he should sing a hymn. I thought it might do good, so I consented. "Before you begin," I said, "you had better tell me what it is, so that I can give it out."

"Well," he said, looking very serious, "the first two lines is—

' She comes home tight
On Saturday night.' "

Need I say that the song was declined with thanks? Seeing he was repulsed, another ragamuffin stepped up, and as a compensation desired to perform "a double shuffle." Yes, they know how to make a joke, and enjoy one, too.

In one of the streets, noted for its vice and wretchedness, a street where all kinds of bad characters live, there is, in a particular part, a cluster of tumble-down old tenements. The doors are low and broken; the floors sink as you walk over them; peculiar smells abound; dirt and squalor reign. At the top of one of these tenements, in an attic, lived a poor dock labourer with his wife and four children. The room was a perfect picture of misery; the stairs which led up to it were in many places rotten. In each of the three stories lived two or three families. The dock labourer occupied the one nearest the sky. The room was very small; furniture there was none. In one corner was a heap of dirty rags on which they slept. Work had fallen scarce; food was limited. The man's health had given way. Day by day he had gone to the dock gates seeking a job, but he was pushed aside by stronger men.

His case appeared hopeless. The eldest girl of the family was named Peggy, or "Peg." She was a typical slum girl, her hair matted, her clothing in rags, her face wistful, hungry, full of sharpness, yet having withal a far-away look, which, to the seeing eye, seemed to hide the angel soul. On the night when the dolls were consecrated to their ministry of love in the slum, Peg was present, and to her delight received as a gift the one with the clogged feet and the smiling face. Oh, how she hugged her, and kissed her, and thrust her for warmth into her own bosom, covering the creature with the rags which hung upon her own frail form, and then knocked another girl over because she dared to touch the "bootiful little thing"! Her sole concern was her new friend. How many conversations they had together that evening I cannot tell, for she talked

to the doll, and the doll appeared to answer her back, smiling at all she said. It was a happy scene. The last hymn was sung, and Peg passed into the cold, dark street. But to Peg there was no cold, no darkness. London was Paradise, her attic heaven, with Dolly near her side. Down the dirty street she bounded ; she climbed the rotten stairs and rushed into the room.

“Mother ! Dad ! See here !” and holding up the doll, she whirled round the room like a dancing dervish.

It was some minutes before she was sufficiently calmed to tell her father and mother how and where she had come into the possession of her coveted prize. Mother heard her tale, and quietly brushed away a tear. The father also, as he looked at the doll and watched his child’s glee, seemed to be thinking of happier days.

“Peg, you ’ll let us have a share, won’t you ?” asked her father.

“Yes, everybody can share,” said Peg. “But how ?”

“Well, you see, there’s mother and me, Kit, young Jim, and the baby. If you covers it up to yourself, we’ll never see it. I tells you what we’ll do.”

“Yes, what ?” said Peg, giving the doll another suffocating hug.

“Well, I’ll fasten it up on the wall, and then we can all see it. What says you ?”

“All right,” said Peg with glee, glad that her doll would give pleasure to all. I feel, somehow, that Dolly herself was glad, for her mission in London was to bless.

A hammer and a nail were with some difficulty borrowed, and the dock labourer pinned the doll on the whitewashed wall. There she was, smiling, smiling, ever smiling, on the poor creatures around her. The very smile on her face seemed like a sunbeam from the face of God. It was a new era in the poor dock labourer’s life. The first day after the doll had been enthroned he went out again to

seek work, carrying a song in his mouth and hope in his heart. A job was secured. It was but a small one, but it was a start. Days of labour followed. Strength returned, and days of blessing came back. One day seated in the attic, now brightened by many a little gift of love, he was watching with pride his wife trying a new frock on Peg.

"Dad," said Peg, "I'll give you a kiss for buying me this."

The man got up and took down the doll from the wall, still smiling, and said as he kissed it, "Here, Peg, you must kiss the doll first, and then me. It is she that's made all the difference."

Peg knew what her father meant, and kissed both his lips and the doll's. No more sacred thing ever entered that home than that toy.

Poor Peg! It was her last festival. One day a loud scream echoed down the old court. Women and men rushed out, and then towards a heavy dray that had suddenly stopped. For there under the wheels was poor Peg, a bruised, battered mass. The girl, as by a miracle, recovered consciousness, and as rough but kindly hands lifted her she said:—

"Take me home."

They bore her, the life-blood dripping on the ground, to the old attic up the rotten stairs. They laid her gently on the bed. The father was sent for from the docks, and came. The doctor said nothing could be done. Poor Peg also felt that her end was near. She opened her eyes, and, searching the room, she fixed them on the doll.

"Dad," whispered the girl, "give me Dolly."

The father, with tears in his eyes, turned to the wall where the doll hung, and taking it down, handed it to the child. Eagerly she pressed the senseless thing to her lips, smiled, and was gone.

"A Star for my Crown."

THE day was bitterly cold. The north wind was driving the snow furiously along. For several days before a keen frost had prevailed, until road, mountain, and meadow had a covering hard as granite. But now the beautiful snowflakes were transforming the many-coloured robe of nature into a spotless white. Like Milton's

"Myriads of immortal spirits darkening heaven,"

so the snowy particles, like a "universal host," dimmed the splendour of the wintry sky, shutting out the vision of the open country by an impenetrable gloom.

To the mind impressed with the sense of the divine in nature there is a mysterious suggestion about the thickening gloom of mist, or cloud, or storm. This peculiar phase of nature's influence has not been missed in the realms of literature, poetry, and art. Thomson, in his *Seasons*, speaks of the

"Doubling fogs around the hill, hiding from the sight
The mountain vast, sublime."

The sense of the infinite deepens upon us as Nature wraps us in her shadow. Like some laughing faun of ancient legend, half revealing her imaginary loveliness through the mythical flora, Nature in every mood gives vague, mysterious hints of the eternally beautiful beyond. The genius of Turner lies more in the gloom of shadowing mist or cloud than in aught else. Behind the visible

form lies the infinite suggestion. Turner's works are hints of the eternal. Turner himself was so wrapped in the illusive moods of Nature as to assert on one occasion that you could never see any landscape which was not more or less "foggy."

But to my story.

On the afternoon of the day mentioned above, I commenced a round of house-to-house visitation. The purpose of my visits was to speak to the people about Jesus Christ, and, where it was possible, to pray with them.

The streets of the village were almost deserted. The cold had driven all the people indoors, excepting those whom business or necessity compelled to be abroad. The weather was unpropitious for spiritual work; but, uncongenial as the day was, I believed that attention to my duty might lead to good results, and in this the sequel will show that I was not mistaken.

Reaching my destination, at the first house door I began my labour.

The cold was intense. My blood seemed almost frozen. Several times I was tempted to give up my task for that day, but Jesus' love proved stronger than nature's cold, and, like President Lincoln, I continued "pegging away."

To many of the people I gave tracts, to others a word of exhortation. Some received me kindly, some indifferently, while one or two had difficulty to answer me civilly.

At length I came to a house which, judging from the outside, appeared to be tenanted by people belonging to the labouring class. The cottage stood by itself on the high-road leading from the village. I knocked at the door, and in a few moments it was opened by a woman of medium height, who appeared to be about fifty years of age. Offering her a tract, I inquired if the family attended the house of God.

"No, sir," she answered, "we don't go anywhere except-

ing to church sometimes. But will you come in and warm yourself, for it is very cold."

Thanking her, I went inside. Placing a chair, she requested me to be seated. Having done so, I glanced hastily round the room. I was pleased with the quiet air of cleanliness and comfort which prevailed. The furniture was poor, but it was displayed to the best advantage. The home was that of an agricultural labourer.

On the right-hand side of the rude fireplace, seated on a low stool, was a young girl, apparently about fourteen years of age. There was something so peculiarly solemn about her appearance that my attention was arrested. Her lily-white hands, pallid cheeks, and large expressive eyes, bright with a peculiar light, betokened early dissolution. Consumption's dread grip had seized her.

Turning to the mother (for such I judged the woman to be), I began to speak to her about spiritual things. I soon discovered that she was totally ignorant of the grace which brings salvation. I declared to her the counsel of God, and pressed upon her immediate acceptance the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the midst of my exhortation the door of the cottage opened, and a tall man entered the room. He bore on one shoulder a large stick or staff, on the end of which was a rush basket, in which, I suppose, he carried the provision for his daily toil. Casting a not very friendly look at me, he threw the basket and stick off his shoulder into a corner.

Noticing that I had in my hand a Bible, his unfriendly glance deepened into a scowl. Pretending not to notice it, I said :—

"I am glad to see you, my friend. My purpose in calling upon you is to give you and your family an invitation to the special Mission which I am conducting in the Primitive Methodist chapel, but, beyond all that, to invite you to Him who on the cross died for you."

The words had scarcely left my lips when, with an angry gesture, he said :—

“I’m not going to flatter you, sir, but I tell you straight that I don’t go to such places, and, more than that, I shall not begin, so it’s no use either you or anybody else coming to bother me about religion. Besides, if I ever did go to a place of worship, I should never think of going to the place you invite me to. But I’m not going anywhere ; I’m going to a club feast to-night, and hope to have a jolly good spree.”

As soon as the man had uttered these words he rose from the chair where he had been seated, and strode angrily into a back room.

The tone of bitterness in which the man spoke rankled in my heart for a moment. Not wishing needlessly to arouse any more of the man’s evil passion, I prepared to depart. Surely my visit, to that home at least, was a failure. Further expostulation or appeal could accomplish no good. Just then my attention was once more directed to the girl seated by the fire, who, during the altercation, had remained perfectly still. Her large eyes were fixed upon me with a kind of piteously inquiring look. I had not spoken to her. I might never see her again. Should I leave a word with her? Leaning towards her, I said :—

“My dear girl, are you unwell?”

“Yes, sir,” she answered, “I am very ill indeed.”

“I thought so,” I said. “And do you know that some day, perhaps before long, you will die and pass away from this world for ever?”

“Yes, I know I shall,” she answered quietly, and coughed a hollow cough.

“Well,” I continued, “though weak and sinful, God loves you, and cares for you, and He has provided a beautiful home far beyond this world of pain and sin for all those who love and obey Him. Should you not like

to go to that holy place of rest and joy when you leave this life?"

Her pale features lighted up for a moment as she eagerly answered, "Oh, yes, I should!"

Then in simple speech I told her of Him whose death on the cross opened a way to God for all who with loving, obedient hearts believe in His name.

How eagerly the child drank in the sweet message of peace! Never had teacher more attentive scholar than she.

Having ended the conversation, I bowed in prayer. Then wishing them "good-afternoon," I passed into the cold street.

* * * * *

Months rolled away. The winter was again upon us,

"Sullen and sad with all his rising train,
Vapours and clouds and storms."

Once more, in God's providence, I found myself in the same village. My sphere of toil as a mission preacher had, with the circling year, brought me again to the Society in which twelve months before I had laboured. The visit to the labourer's cottage, as described above, had passed from my memory. Other incidents and scenes had crowded it from my mind.

Arriving at the gentleman's house who was to entertain me during my second visit, I prepared for a good rest before entering upon my first service. The long railway journey had been very wearisome, and I needed the quiet hour before the public utterance. But my intention was interfered with. A few minutes only had elapsed before a knock was heard at the front door. The servant answered it, and I heard a woman's voice ask,—

"Has the preacher come, please?"

"Yes," answered the servant.

"Could I see him?" asked the voice.

"I will inquire," said the maid.

"There is a person at the door who desires to see you, sir."

"Show her in," I said. "Well, what is it you require?" I said as the woman came into the room.

"I hope you will pardon my troubling you, but I am attending a girl who is dying at the other end of the village, and she has been asking for you, sir. She is so anxious to see you, and has begged me to come and ask you to call and see her before she died."

"Do you say she is dying?"

"Yes. She will not last much longer."

"What does she want to see me for?" I asked.

"I don't know, but she is very happy, and talks much about Jesus and heaven."

I promised to go, and the woman departed, after giving me instructions how to find the house.

A quarter of an hour later I was making the best of my way to the address given. This time no tempest was abroad, "wrapped in black glooms," nor "joyless rains," nor "low bent clouds," to hide the day's fair face. The air was clear but keen; the frost-king was again supreme.

Coming near the house to which I had been directed, I was astonished to find that it was the same in which a year before I had received such a rude reception. The whole scene of my former visit instantly flashed across my mind.

As soon as I knocked at the door it was opened by the woman who received me before. In a subdued tone she invited me inside. Passing into the house, I saw to the right a cot-bed, on which lay the child to whom a year before I had spoken of Jesus. She had wasted away almost to a skeleton. Consumption, swift and sure, was stealing away

her young life. A look convinced me that the dread change was at hand. The sweet liberator was near, whose service should give to the waiting one a larger life. Blessed Death! He looses all bonds; he rests the weary, aching heart; for every fragile form from which he sets the spirit free "a hundred virtues rise in shapes of mercy, charity—and love to walk the world and bless it." Incorruptible, fearless, without respect of persons, to the wicked a terror, to the good a friend! Here, once again in my life, in this simple home, I stood in his presence.

As soon as the dying girl saw me she smiled and beckoned me near. As I took her hand she said feebly,—

"I am so glad to see you. Thank you for coming. I wanted to speak to you before I died. I asked God to spare me long enough. I heard you were coming again to preach, and I was so glad. I wanted to thank you for speaking to me a year ago about the Saviour. I have loved Him ever since. Oh, yes, I love Him; and now," she said, casting her eye upwards, "I am going to that 'beautiful home.'"

These words were spoken in a broken tone. Between the gaspings for breath her sentences were completed; and yet they were uttered with a fervour which proved they were the language of her heart.

That room to me was the "house of God," that little cot "the gate of heaven." Here was the bread cast upon the waters found after many days.

The mother of the child stood at the foot of the bed weeping, and my own tears were not far away. After she had finished speaking she lay perfectly still. Her face seemed like polished marble. The ghastliness of death had gone; she lay like a corpse, but like a corpse on which you perceived wings. The path of the soul into the invisible was bright with the light of heaven.

A few more minutes passed, and a deeper physical change was marked. The end was drawing nearer.

She opened her eyes and whispered, "Mother!"

"Yes, my child," answered the mother.

"Where is my father?"

"My dear, he is resting. You know he has watched by you a long time, and he is now laid down to sleep."

"Call him; I am dying."

The mother went to the foot of the stairs and called. A few minutes more, and the father, the man who had behaved so roughly a year before, entered the room. I did not know how he would feel in my presence. I passed from the bed into the shadow of the doorway. One look convinced me that I had nothing to fear. His spirit was broken. Sorrow had brought him low. Moving to me, he passed quickly to the side of his dying child. Taking her hand in his, while deep emotion stirred his breast, he said:—

"My dear child, what is it you want? What can I do for you?"

"One thing, father, only one thing."

"What is that one thing?" asked he.

"Kneel down by my side, and I will tell you."

The father, sobbing bitterly, knelt, and she continued as follows:—

"Father, I am going to Jesus. The angels are waiting to take me to Him; and, father, I want you and mother to promise that you will meet me there. That is the one thing. Will you promise?"

Never can I forget that solemn moment, with the father and mother kneeling, for the mother also had instinctively sunk to her knees. The pleading tones of the dying child and the deep emotion of the parents, these vividly live with me still. At last, with a great sob, there came the response of the father:

"I will."

The mother also answered, "I will."

Glad am I to state that those vows were sacredly kept.

Having gained the promise, the girl lay back exhausted with her effort. Her eyes closed. The excited breathing became hushed. The lips parted. A smile as of heaven lit up her features. The gates were opening. Sounds seraphic burst upon her ear. The lips moved.

She whispered, "Mother! mother! can you hear?"

"Hear what, my child?"

"The angels. Hark! how they sing! See, they wait for me. Yes, I'm coming."

A look of glad recognition, and she was gone.

A few days afterwards they laid her body in the grave. In an obscure corner of the village churchyard is the mound under which she sleeps. No tablet informs the passer-by who lies there. It is a nameless grave. But to me the spot is dear indeed. I have often visited the sacred, silent shrine, and thought of the winter's day when I spoke the saving word. The last time I stood at the grave I was with a friend. The scenery around was solemnly beautiful. The long meadow grass covered the tomb with a carpet of green. A cluster of snowdrops was growing close by, imparting a pleasant contrast to the surrounding colour, and also typifying the youth and purity of the life which the shattered temple, low-lying beneath, had once enshrined. The winds paused and died away in silence, as though conscious of our sacred feelings. The sympathetic shadows of an old yew-tree fell upon us where we stood. The linnet and throstle swelled the air with song, while far overhead a lark, jubilant with praise, carried its music a little nearer heaven. The old church, grey with age, was close by. The glowing scene was symbolic of higher things. The softened splendour of Nature's beauty was to me prophetic of a truer reality. The joy which through a thousand media leaps to Nature's lip is pregnant with a life of universal harmony.

Nature is a prophet, dark, weird, mystical, at times, but her hieroglyphics, when correctly deciphered, contain vast hints of the coming day, yes, the day when the spell of death's mysterious slumber shall be broken, and the dead in Christ shall rise. What reunions! what recognitions! It is some comfort to me to know that among the gems in the Saviour's crown one will be there which I found for His glory.

“When my final farewell to the world I have said,
And gladly lay down to my rest;
When softly the watchers shall say, ‘He is dead!’
And fold my pale hands o’er my breast;
And when with my glorified vision at last
The walls of that ‘city’ I see;
SOMEONE will then at the beautiful gate
Be waiting and watching for ME.”

THE END.

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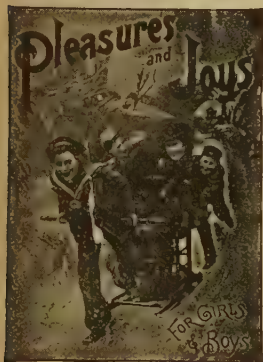
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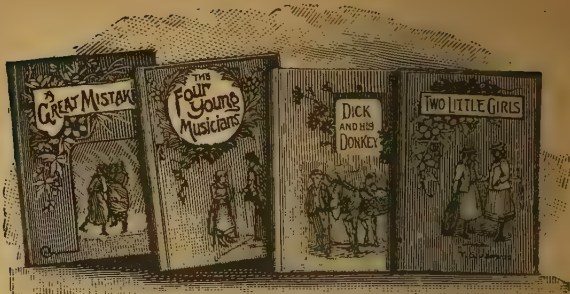
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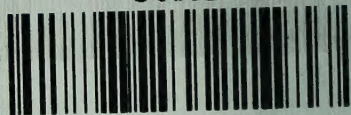
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